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Protesting the 1968 Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City, NJ, second-wave feminists targeted racism, militarism, excessive consumerism, and sexism. Yet nearly fifty years after this protest, popular memory recalls these activists as bra-burners—employing a widespread, derogatory image of feminist activists as trivial and laughably misguided. Contemporary academics, too, have critiqued second-wave feminism as a largely white, middle-class, and essentialist movement, dismissing second-wave practices in favor of more recent, more "progressive" waves of feminism. Following recent rhetorical scholarly investigations into public acts of remembering and forgetting, my dissertation project contests the derogatory characterizations of second-wave feminist activism. I use archival research on consciousness-raising groups to challenge the pejorative representations of these activists within academic and popular memory, and ultimately, to critique telic narratives of feminist progress.

In my dissertation, I analyze a rich collection of archival documents—promotional materials, consciousness-raising guidelines, photographs, newsletters, and reflective essays—to demonstrate that consciousness-raising groups were collectives of women engaging in literacy practices—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—to make personal and political material and discursive change, between and across differences among women. As I demonstrate, consciousness-raising, the central practice of second-wave feminism across the 1960s and 1970s, developed out of a collective rhetorical theory that not only linked personal identity to political discourses, but also

linked the emotional to the rational in the production of knowledge. The grassroots practice of consciousness-raising, designed to be accessible to all women, was taken up by diverse feminist organizations across the nation including the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Association (ALFA), the National Alliance of Black Feminists (NABF), the National Organization of Women (NOW), and many others. As I trace differences and conflicts among different groups of women across these archival materials, I argue that consciousness-raising was a literacy practice with flexible do-it-yourself guidelines, tailored for each group's needs and geographic location. As such, I connect consciousness-raising groups to a history and tradition of women's collective rhetorical practices feminist historiographers have recently established. Like clubwomen of the late 19th and early 20th century, consciousness-raising groups fit a historical pattern of women's collective literacy practices—practices that are repeatedly erased from historical narratives. Ultimately my project addresses active efforts to *forget* and *misremember* second-wave feminism, and I argue that the strategic forgetting of these sites diminishes the political potency these practices might hold for marginalized groups in the present day.

THE LITERACY PRACTICES OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING: AN ARGUMENT FOR REMEMBERING AND RECITATION

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

READING THE ECHOES OF CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING: AN ARGUMENT FOR RECITION

> Feminist recitation thus allows us not only to revalue what haunts the feminist present, but also to rethink how the threads of the past come together. –Clare Hemmings

Sitting in a large circle with fellow female English Studies professionals, tenured and untenured, faculty and graduate students, Dr. Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater told a story about her doctoral graduation. After the ceremony, she was driving her family home, and her father said with astonishment, "Look, she can drive!" I need not point out the irony of Chiseri-Strater's completed degree juxtaposed with her father's surprise at her ability to operate a motor vehicle. During this meeting, the group discussed the topic of confidence in our professional lives. The selected discussion leaders, an untenured faculty member and a graduate student, began the meeting with a few questions about confidence at work, and the other participating women reflected on these questions and took turns articulating their answers. Group discussion would linger over particular instances of gendered controversies that were representative of the experience of multiple women. Participants analyzed and discussed such instances in order to make sense of them before the discussion moved into other subtopics on confidence and work. This was one of many meetings that have taken place as part of a project called Women in English (WiE) at th

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a group of female members of the English Department started in 2013 for the purposes of mentoring female faculty and graduate students and of addressing gendered issues in academe. I draw attention to a snapshot of one of these meetings because the WiE meetings echo the strategic practices of consciousness-raising so prevalent in the Women's Liberation Movement (1960-1979).[1] It is not only the practice of developing a women's only space for dialogue about issues of gender that echoes consciousness-raising sessions. WiE's rhetorical exigency—the need to develop a place for dialogue, affirmative support, and tentative answers—resonates with the historical purposes of the development of consciousness-raising meetings.

As the WiE discussion group has grown and developed over the past three years, and as I continue to develop my own scholarly interest in feminist rhetorics and historiography, particularly in second-wave feminist history, I began to ask myself certain questions engendered by these meetings. After all, WiE meetings, like consciousness-raising meetings, rotate topics and leaders and compare personal experience with institutional expectations and values. Are these meetings our own form of a contemporary consciousness-raising group? If WiE is a consciousness-raising group, started organically, what does this say about the value of consciousness-raising groups today? And, why do we *not* explicitly call it a consciousness-raising group? Why are we developing similar practices to address many of the same problems as second-wave feminists, while simultaneously failing to recognize the crucial role consciousness-raising

[1] The Women's Liberation Movement is often referred to as second-wave feminism. I will use the terms interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

played in the history of second-wave feminism? What is it about our disciplinary and public memory that allows us to form a group similar to second-wave feminist consciousness-raising groups, without naming it as such? Furthermore, how might we re-remember consciousness-raising (and the various ways we name it) differently to make it part of productive and valuable current practices of feminism?

One might argue that the cluster of gendered issues experienced by women in the English Department at UNCG occurred because of the personality of certain individuals or department politics. However, this would be an incomplete assessment. The issues at UNCG are indicative of larger cultural patterns experienced by women across the U.S., experiences women have been responding to by meeting and sharing their narratives. In fact, our group, WiE, was modeled after a similar group that was started at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. However, this is not just an issue rooted in North Carolina or the American South for that matter. Recent news publications reveal these troubling trends at a national level. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, for example, has published articles that explore women's dress, femininity, and perceived authority in the profession or lack thereof because of their feminine appearance. A marked lack of confidence in the production of scholarship has been recorded particularly among female graduate students and faculty (see MacPhail). These national trends are not only housed in universities' humanity departments. *PLoS One*, a peer-reviewed journal in science, recently garnered attention when they rejected an article because it was written only by women scientists. A reviewer of the study claimed the female authors needed a male to co-author the study, to "serve as a possible check against interpretations that may sometimes be drifting too far

away from empirical evidence into ideologically-based assumptions" (qtd. in Cueto). Beyond female academics' struggles with gendered issues in the institution of the university, the federal investigations centering on Title IX and 55 universities' mishandling of rape cases on campus in 2015 further demonstrates a disturbing pattern of discrimination and violence towards women in educational settings.

Clare Hemmings's quotation that opens this chapter insists that scholars pay attention to what "haunts" the present in order to revalue it and to rethink how histories have come to shape the present moment. As an echo and as a resurgent pattern of women's meaning-making, I argue that the WiE meetings are a kind of haunting presence recalling the process of consciousness-raising. This haunting presence invites the practice of what Hemmings calls feminist recitation. Feminist recitation is a method that "is not the telling of a new story, but a renarration of the same story from a different perspective. It operates as a breaking open of the presumed relation between past and the present" (181). In this case, using archival research from three different archival sites—Duke University's Women's Liberation Movement Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago's National Alliance of Black Feminists Collection, and the Chicago Public Library's Vivian Harsh Research Collection—I investigate the process and practices of second-wave feminist consciousness-raising, offering a different perspective through which to recall them. I highlight the use of literacy in consciousness-raising groups connecting consciousness-raising to a tradition of women's collective literacy practices. By naming and drawing attention to use of literacy in second-wave feminist consciousness-raising, I construct consciousness-raising not as a failed and anachronistic

practice of the past, but as a process that was so advantageous it is echoed in the present. Using feminist recitation I rethink the description and history of the practice of consciousness-raising to show the powerful impact of the rhetorical work and collective voice of women working in the Women's Liberation Movement.

The Scholarly Conversation of Feminist Rhetorics

As a field, feminist rhetorics' objects of study and methodologies include scholarly practices of rescue, recovery, and (re)inscription (see Royster and Kirsch; Tasker and Holt-Underwood). Feminist rhetorical scholars recover women, past and present, and their rhetorical achievements. Additionally, feminist rhetorical scholars reinscribe and reform methodologies in the field of rhetoric arguing those already relied upon and accepted methods of rhetorical study shape both *how* rhetoric can be understood and *who* can count as a rhetor, methods that often erase women's rhetorical achievements. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch argue as feminist rhetorical scholars we must:

> learn to ask new and different questions and to find more and better ways to listen to the multidimensional voices that are speaking from within and across many of the lines that might divide us as language users—by social and political hierarchies, geography, material circumstances, ideologies, time and space, and the like (4).

As a feminist rhetorical scholar, I cull Hemmings's act of feminist recitation from feminist theory and add it to feminist rhetorical studies as a useful method to attend to the rhetorical construction of history and public memory.

My project enters and extends the conversation of feminist rhetorical historiography in two ways. First, I analyze the public memory of the recent history of consciousness-raising groups of second-wave feminism (1960-1979) as a means to situate the diverse achievements of second-wave feminist consciousness-raising in the disciplinary and public imagination. Rhetoric scholars have attended to feminist historiography in multiple historical periods reaching as far back as Sappho in ancient Greece, and feminist rhetoric scholars have worked to create histories that not only look backwards based on present needs, but also look forward (Buchanan and Ryan; Jarratt; Royster and Kirsch). Recently, Jessica Enoch and Jordynn Jack have called to "broaden the scope of feminist historiographic vision to consider questions of public memory" (534). Like feminist historiographic methodologies, Enoch and Jack argue that the purpose of rhetorical explorations into public memory are to put the "past in conversation with the present, and to explore how the rhetorical practice of remembering women can reshape ideas in the contemporary moment about who women have been and who they might become" (534). Specifically, they highlight how public acts of remembering and forgetting are rhetorical and employed strategically. They emphasize that the question is not so much who is remembered or forgotten, but what rhetorical strategies are used to remember and forget, and "what effect their presence and absence has on everyday life in the present moment" (534). Hemming's feminist recitation attends to the political grammar of historical narratives to discover the ways those histories are amended. I argue recitation is also a useful way to identify the rhetorical strategies used to remember and forget. While remembering second-wave feminist consciousness-raising groups through a

method of recitation, I recognize and acknowledge that writers of histories are not disinterested, that language is not neutral, and that knowledge is not innocent. Women participating in consciousness-raising groups were situated historically, temporally, geographically so were not free from their own oppressive thoughts and beliefs. My project moves beyond simply celebrating and remembering consciousness-raising groups as only liberatory in conjunction with identity, literacy, and agency. These groups are worthy of re-memory and historical investigation in order to understand the ways they produced a large body of knowledge from women's perspectives to ameliorate gender discrimination. Understanding the literacy practices used and the rhetorical devices of telling history that obscured such practices allows scholars to refine contemporary practices aimed at eliminating the gender discrimination that continues in the current political climate.

The second way I contribute to feminist rhetorical historiography is by extending the scholarship that uncovers and locates an ongoing tradition of women's consciousness-raising groups before the 1960s and by arguing for more research to reclaim and make visible that tradition. By naming the literacy practices of consciousness-raising, a web forms connecting women's organizational rhetorical practices in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, Wendy Sharer illustrates how the women's groups Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the League of Women Voters (LWV) used collective literacy practices to challenge structures of political discourse after the passage of the 19th Amendment. Sharer notes that the groups' collective literacy practices were a kind of "political literacy" action in

which the goal was "analyzing, assessing, arguing, and changing the American political system" (9). The Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition is another example of women's collective literacy practices in the contemporary moment. The Coalition was formed in 1989 with one of its two purposes being "the education of women faculty and graduate students in the politics of the profession" (Constitution). Naming the literacy practices of second-wave feminist consciousness-raising groups allows me to establish a rhetorical tradition in which collectives such as consciousness-raising groups link women's groups ranging from suffrage organizers to contemporary feminist academics. This project, finally, connects to the larger discipline of rhetoric and composition and Thomas Miller's call for more research into "'community literacies,' or practices of information access and use enacted in specific locales beyond the university (*Formation* 283)" (qtd. in Sharer 6). Like Voichita Nachescu posits, consciousness-raising groups were the "informal schools of the second wave feminist movement" (1).

Rhetorical scholarship on the work of consciousness-raising groups in second-wave feminism include Tasha Dubriwny and Jean Bessette. Dubriwny argues that consciousness-raising speak outs constitute a form of collective rhetoric that revises the gendered history of rhetoric, traditionally conceived as an individual project in which one speaker persuaded an audience. Building on Dubriwny's work, Bessette notes that collections of anecdotes about lesbian experience in the 1960s-70s function as a retroactive archive and enact a long distance, trans-temporal consciousness-raising. While Dubriwny makes a case for studying collective rhetoric and the importance of an

epistemology of experience and validation for oppressed groups, Bessette demonstrates how transformative effects of consciousness-raising groups are both rhetorically fruitful and limiting for diverse identities. My own project builds on the notion of consciousness-raising as "informal schools" where women learned from and taught each other through dialogue. It is these informal schools that I investigate to uncover the literacy practices that allowed women to lay the narratives of their personal experiences side-by-side to build up a litany of evidence for the production of knowledge, to write and circulate texts, and to intervene in the oppressive material conditions of women's situations.

Scholarly Conversation on Literacy

The term *literacy* in its broadest iteration is meaning-making, and this dissertation relies on two other major accepted academic premises about literacy and language. The first is that literacy is rhetorical, and the second is that discourse is ideological. In its broadest sense literacy is a human capacity to make meaning through acts of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Because meaning-making is dependent on context, the capacity to create it is also dependent on context. As scholar Deborah Brandt has pointed out, "literacy counts in life as people find it, although how much it counts, what it counts for, and how it pays off vary considerably" (5). In other words, people use literacy based on the rhetorical exigency of their contexts. How that type of literacy is valued in larger cultural contexts depends on power dynamics and national cultural, political, and economic values. For instance, even though the literacy practices of consciousness-raising were highly valued by women participating in the Women's Liberation Movement because they led to the creation and circulation of various woman-positive

bodies of literature, and even though these practices were valuable for non-participating women who benefitted from the production of these texts, the literacy practices of consciousness-raising groups and their textual productions were not necessarily valued in popular American culture and politics.

Language, the medium of literacy, is not neutral, nor is it necessarily easy to harness. Scholars have demonstrated language is a slippery tool mired in social-temporal and contradictory meanings that heavily rely on rhetorical context for meaning to come to fruition (see Bakhtin). Moreover, discourse is always ideological, and thus there is no neutral point from which to view the world and construct knowledge about the world. James Berlin insists that the evaluative means of discourse be based in questions about ethics and identity. Scholars must ask: "What are the effects of our knowledge? Who benefits from a given version of the truth?" (679). These questions recognize that discourse shapes reality and the various communities living that reality. These questions are also concerned less with a fundamental Truth and more concerned with the ethical implications a given version of the truth has for the lived reality of various communities of people. Knowledge is produced from particular standpoints and social locations. If what is accepted as true is taken from only one standpoint, then that truth will contain the inherent blind spots of that singular perspective. Dialogue becomes about recognizing those different standpoints and the logics from which they operate. What this reveals is that knowledge production is highly dependent on intersectional identities of those producing knowledge in a particular situation. The literacy practices of consciousness-raising are so valuable to study because they also acknowledge the need for multiple

voices to make knowledge, and they use dialogue as one of their central meaning-making strategies.

Consciousness-raising groups highlight and illustrate the transformative nature of practicing literacy. Literacy practices not only have the capacity to transform understandings of individuals' views of self and the world, but that changing understanding, that revision of consciousness, may also incite individuals to intervene in the material world. So literacy has the capacity quite literally to change the world. This is a concept central to Freire's famous *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in which he underscores the ways power dynamics shape knowledge production. Freire describes this process—*conscientizaçao*—as an attitude of awareness and agency for language users. *Conscientizaçao* is the possible tentative effect of dialogic literacy practices in which critical thinking and dialogue allow language users to reflect on their "situationality," a form of critical thinking:

> People, as beings 'in a situation,' find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark. They will tend to reflect on their own 'situationality' to the extent that they are challenged by it to act upon it. Human beings are because they are in a situation. . . . Reflection upon situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence: critical thinking by means of which people discover each other to be 'in a situation.'. . .Humankind emerges from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled. Intervention in reality—historical awareness itself—thus represents a step forward from emergence, and results from the *conscientizaçao* of the situation. *Conscientizaçao* is the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence. (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 109)

The attitude of awareness of one's particular context not only allows a learner to see his or her material situation in a different way but also allows the subject to act in ways (with agency) that are most beneficial. According to Freire, through varying dialogic literacy practices that are attentive to power dynamics, the subject can become aware of her surroundings and their value in a different way, then act according to this newfound knowledge. Because *conscientizaçao* is an ongoing and recursive process, after acting in the world, the subject can continue to engage in literacy practices to gain a further awareness of the situation, and act again.[2] Consciousness-raising meetings were used to reflect on the self in situation, and they were also used to reflect on the actions and interventions feminists took in order to continue to develop and refine such material interventions.

Importantly, a rhetorical perspective of literacy acknowledges that literacy happens in situations where different groups of people and different kinds of literacy practices are bound up in power relations. Brandt provides historical examples of working-class families in England and African American slaves in the United States to

[2] *Conscientizaçao*, then, or consciousness here is derived from an understanding of language theory in which, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, the very ability to think—to have consciousness at all—depends on language. Similar to Freire's *conscientizaçao*, in his theory of social-epistemic rhetoric, James Berlin insists the point of education is for students to achieve a liberated consciousness, or a cognitive freedom in which each student understands that all rhetoric is ideology, and that there is no neutral point from which she may view the world. Liberated consciousness allows the students to think of the world as a place without natural laws or universal truths, a place were what is "good" must be decided on, and a place where the distribution of power grants authority (679). Most importantly, liberated consciousness is an understanding of the dialectical nature of knowledge production in which "the material, the social, and the subjective are at once the producers and the products of ideology" (Berlin 679). While I see Berlin's liberated consciousness as in the same school of thought and very similar to that of Freire's, I use Freire's take because *conscientizaçao* argues that this coming to awareness is a continual process of growth and transformation, whereas Berlin's gestures to reaching telic point that one does not necessarily require a continual practice of revision.

demonstrate the subversive ways less privileged communities have used standard literacy practices to shape their worlds for the better:

> In the days before free public schooling in England, Protestant Sunday schools warily offered basic reading instruction to working-class families as part of evangelical duty. To the horror of many in the church sponsorship, these families insistently, sometimes riotously demanded of their Sunday schools more instruction, including in writing and math, because it provided means for upward mobility. Through the sponsorship of Baptist and Methodist ministries, African Americans in slavery taught each other to understand the Bible in subversively liberatory ways. Under a conservative regime, they developed forms of critical literacy that sustained religious, educational, and political movements both before and after emancipation. (20)

The examples of working-class families in England and the African American slaves in the United States, like the Brazilian peasants Freire worked with, illustrate how the purpose of literacy practices vary based on peoples' needs. These needs are ostensibly connected to group identities—race, class, gender—which are shaped by the groups' access to power. Working-class families in England used literacy for upward mobility rather than developing a specific kind of religious morality. African American slaves used literacy to survive, escape, and fight to abolish American slavery. As Freire points out, literacy is used as a kind of meaning-making that is an intervention in a material situation in order to create change both in the ideology and material conditions of the situation. Thus, if scholars think of literacy only as an innocuous, neutral skill, they forget the ways in which literacy is meaning-making, and meaning-making is always bound up in power relations. Similarly, they forget the ways that access to standard literacy practices has been used to exclude, marginalize, and oppress certain peoples. Literacy

practices should not be studied without also understanding the people using those practices.

In situations where communities of people have been spoken for and about by others, when their own ability to create meaning has been silenced, literacy is a resource that allows silenced groups access to the dignity of speech. Henry Giroux articulates literacy as a presence and ability: "To be literate is not to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future" (*Read* 11). It is a practice that allows an individual to develop agency in meaning-making and simultaneously critique power structures shaping discourse and the material world. Being able to engage in discourse consciously in order to name one's own experience from one's own perspective challenges dominant narratives that encourage marginalized groups' participation in practices that are against their own interests, and this challenge allows marginalized groups to develop alternative material practices that improve their lives:

> As a narrative for agency, literacy becomes synonymous with an attempt to rescue history, experience, and vision from conventional discourse and dominant social relations. It means developing the theoretical and practical conditions through which human beings can locate themselves in their own histories and in doing so make themselves present as agents in the struggle to expand the possibilities of human life and freedom. (*Read* 11).

The literacy practices of consciousness-raising groups included critiquing dominant discourses that spoke for and about women from a male perspective. By developing a safe space for women to give testimony to their personal experience in relation to these discourses, feminists were able to begin to imagine alternatives and construct and

circulate their own texts on these alternative visions for women's lives. Simultaneously, feminists began to make change in the material world around them through protests, legislative lobbying, and the construction of women's health care spaces.

I identify literacy as a practice in self-care and community care. As a practice of care, it is a process that develops tentative conclusions, refuses mastery, and reflects on and remakes meaning as the situation dictates. As a practice of care, it is not something that can be done for another human, but something every human has the right to do for herself or himself in dialogue with others. Finally, the process of these literacy practices is neither linear nor circular; rather it is a nonlinear, infinitely complex process with multiple levels of practice, engagement, and transformation.

The Processes and Practices of Consciousness-Raising Groups

Consciousness-raising meetings between 1960 and 1979 were group meetings that engaged with texts and personal experience in relation to the identity of gender and/or the intersections of gender and race in order to see the function of discourses and experiences of these identity categories.[3] Groups of women, between 5 and 15 in number, came together to critique dominant discourses and to imagine and make change for more fulfilling lives. At regular weekly or monthly meetings, the women achieved this new meaning-making through the following practices: asking questions, articulating experiences, reflecting on experience, reading texts, writing reflections and manifestos, and listening and conversing with one another. Often they chose a topic and leader ahead

[3] Scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw argues that intersectional identity is an understanding of the ways overlapping identities contribute to the experience of existing in a specific social location. Intersectional identity avoids privileging one identity category over another.

of time, and leaders rotated to facilitate the meeting. Sometimes women were asked to read certain texts before the meetings; other times they had small writing assignments. They took notes and planned for consciousness-raising events. Guidelines suggested every woman speak her personal experience before group dialogue. The women tested their own experiences and articulation of such experiences against the normative dominant narratives about the identity of woman, and they created counter stories that made more sense to their own lives and experiences. The example below reveals how they made new knowledge through a composite picture of diverse aspects of womanhood:

> Group members strive to correlate their individual perspectives with those of the others and to combine all their views into a composite, consistent picture (for instance on the topic of "marriage," the group might observe that of all the members, only one has been happy in their marriage, though 6 are or had been married). The group then attempts to relate the composite picture to society's prevailing attitudes, traditions and expectations (for instance, all may have felt that marriage would invariably make a person feel happy and fulfilled). Each person tries to understand the effects of the societal program on her/his own life ("someday, my prince will come," "poor old maid," etc.). The group further tries to develop a psycho-socio-political model accounting for all present realities and to compare this to the conventional model (a simplified output might be, "marriage laws are constricting," "marriage isn't what it's cracked up to be," etc.). (Walker 2)

Once tentative composite knowledge was made, often the groups brainstormed ways to take consciousness-raising action.

Consciousness-raising actions or events were meant to bring the new knowledge to the public and work toward making material, political, and cultural change. Events like the play, *Focus on Me: A Woman's Journey*, were called consciousness-raising events:

> NYRF is sponsoring a production of a feminist play, *Focus on Me: A Woman's Journey*, a play we think reflects the identity struggles so many of us have been through during the past few years. We are sponsoring it 1) as a fund-raising event and 2) as a medium for consciousness-raising. (Shapiro)

The larger consciousness-raising events were strategic public action that became an outgrowth of these smaller groups. Other examples of consciousness-raising events are the 1968 protest of the Miss America pageant, the 1969 Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out, and the New York Radical Feminists' 1971 Rape Speak-Out. While these events and others—such as speak-outs, conferences, written pamphlets, published books, legislative programs, protests, development of women centered spaces such as restaurants and coffee houses, etc.—counted in the broader definition of consciousness-raising events, my dissertation focuses on the private group consciousness-raising meeting practice that was the impetus and catalyst for these public consciousness-raising events. Chapter 3 demonstrates that movement from small consciousness-raising meetings to public events aimed at social change.

These smaller and intimate consciousness-raising groups were based on intersections of the multiple identities of women, despite the ways second-wave feminism is often critiqued as a white middle-class women's only movement. Benita Roth contends that African American and Chicana women were developing their own organizationally distinct feminisms at this time, feminisms based on the intersections of gender and race. Roth insists, "the whitewashing of second-wave feminism has enabled the rise of a myth that fails to explain the actual organizing done by feminists of color" (11). Roth provides a history that illustrates how these diverse second-wave feminisms "proliferated, related

to each other, cooperated, and competed" (11). For instance, Roth provides this description of the webbed engagements of these distinct feminisms that offers a brief explanation of the complexity of the interactions among and between feminists:

> Many white feminists encountered and emulated Black Civil Rights activists in that movement (Evans 1979) and continued to stay abreast of developments in that movement; a number of Black feminists had relationships with white feminists, with Black women represented in the ranks and among the leadership of the National Organization for Women (NOW) . . . .Chicana feminists were sympathetic to a large part of the 'Anglo' feminist agenda, if not to white feminists themselves (Orozco 1976). Black feminists and Chicana feminists critiqued the racial/ethnic and class biases of white women's liberation, but there was also substantial agreement about the elements of a feminist agenda across all three racial/ethnic communities. Abortion rights and reproductive choice; freedom from the violence of rape and battering; the need for low-cost, quality child care; increasing educational and employment opportunities for women; and the wholesale jettisoning of traditional ideas about gender roles were all items of a general feminist agenda in the second wave. Emphases and specific rallying points differed, but there was room for cross-racial/ethnic feminist organizing if we look at the agenda alone. (179)

Consciousness-raising was a grassroots practice designed to be accessible to all women, and it was taken up by diverse feminist organizations across the nation from larger well-known national organization groups like National Organization of Women (NOW) to smaller organizations like National Alliance of Black Feminists (NABF). No doubt there were differences and conflicts among various feminist groups, but consciousness-raising was flexible enough to accommodate and be tailored for each groups' needs, concerns, goals, and geographic location. This dissertation includes archival documents on consciousness-raising groups from feminist collectives like Bread and Roses, Boston 1969-1971; National Alliance of Black Feminists, Chicago 1974-1981; National Organization of Women, Washington D.C. 1966-present; Atlanta Lesbian Feminist

Alliance, Atlanta 1972-1994; New York Radical Feminists, New York 1969-1977; Women's Action Alliance, New York 1971-1997; and Sudsofloppen, California 1968-[c. mid 1970s].

The use of experience in relation to identity regularly appears in scholarly debates, and since experience and identity are major components of this work, a brief explanation of their theoretical value is necessary. Postmodern critiques rightly and astutely work away from the intellectual tendency of essentialism in which individuals and groups have unvariable, fixed and predictable, natural "essence." As a theoretical concept, essentialism relies on the academic trend to privilege one social category (race, class, gender, etc.) as the decisive identity or most important identity for the person or group being discussed. Postmodernists generally agree that the self has no essential nature outside of the grammatical structures that govern language and thought; the self is produced by these structures. As an effect of discourse, the self or identity is a fiction and mystification: "They are mystifying precisely because they treat fictions as facts and cover over the fissures, contradictions, and differences internal to the social construct we call a 'self'" (Moya 6). The use of identity categories can risk naturalizing identities and obscuring the historical conditions and power relations that create such identities in the first place.

Postmodern critics highlight the internal heterogeneity and fluidity of identity categories, and question if identity experience is so divergent, how can we speak of an authentic or exemplary experience, for example "woman's experience"? As Paula Moya argues, "The issue of authority of experience is thus intimately tied to the problem of

representation: if even a woman cannot be trusted to speak accurately for and about 'women,' then how is it possible to speak for or about 'women' at all?" (4). Undoubtedly, a representation of "woman's experience" risks privileging one type of women's experience as normative and, therefore, excluding other types of women's experiences.

Moya responds to critiques of identity finding that neither essentialist nor postmodernist accounts of identity fully help with the politics of identity. Instead she offers a postpositivist realist approach to identity in which objectivity is reclaimed, though it is situational objectivity always amendable to new information. This approach makes claims for the reciprocal relationship of language and identity and their mutual affects on each other. Moya cites the social distribution of wealth as just one reason why scholars and activists cannot get rid of identity categories as political tools. Moreover, despite the normalizing risks and language traps of identity categories, they have provided marginalized groups, such as second-wave feminist consciousness-raising groups, with rhetorical power and agency.

Consciousness-raising groups were built on an assumption that women shared some experiences based on their socialization as women. Texts from white and Black consciousness-raising collectives argue that patriarchal culture prohibited communication and camaraderie between women. If women were prohibited from communicating in certain ways and sought male companionship as protection, while viewing other women as rivals, "[i]t may be that the simple act of communication among women becomes a radicalizing process" (NYRF 6). Although consciousness-raising groups were based on the assumption of some sameness between women, they were aware of the multiple

identities and oppressions that diverse groups of women faced. Feminists acknowledged that consciousness-raising was not an automatic solution and was not suited to understanding of oppression that women did not directly experience, so they did not and could not speak for all women:

> Women learn from each other in consciousness-raising, and if the group is composed of women from the same economic and racial backgrounds, it may be difficult to see the different ways in which women are exploited. Thus while consciousness-raising avoids the pitfalls of rhetoric and abstract discussions, it can also narrow the scope of our newfound knowledge to what we know firsthand. (NYRF 7)

There were interracial consciousness-raising groups and groups that contained women of different classes and sexualities. Ultimately guidelines encouraged the groups to create a space of comfort that took into account diversity of women's experiences. Chapter 2 documents and examines this creation of safe spaces and the development of group trust and intimacy.

Chapter Summaries

Clare Hemming's concept of recitation is a method that offers a retelling of historical narratives about feminism. Feminist recitation provides "a break from the claustrophobic assumption that feminism is anachronistic, has been left behind, is dead and buried" (Hemmings 190). This dissertation argues against the pejorative shorthand of "bra-burner" even in arguments of historical correction and resists the flattening out of second-wave feminist historical narratives present in many academic glosses of history. Instead, I argue that the literacy practices of consciousness-raising can be seen as a recitation—a way to remember the complex and textured history of feminism.

Remembering consciousness-raising sessions as the informal schools of the Women's Liberation Movement recalls second-wave feminism's central practice as the legitimate work of interpreting dominant narratives, rewriting those interpretations, and intervening in the material world on behalf of women.

Chapter 1 demonstrates that consciousness-raising groups were collectives of women engaging in literacy practices—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—to make personal and political material and discursive change, between and across differences among women. As I demonstrate, consciousness-raising—the central practice of second-wave feminism across the 1960s and 1970s—developed out of a collective rhetorical theory that not only linked personal identity to political discourses, but also linked the emotional to the rational in the production of knowledge. This grassroots practice, designed to be accessible to all women, was taken up by diverse feminist organizations across the nation including the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Association (ALFA), the National Alliance of Black Feminists (NABF), the National Organization of Women (NOW), and many others. Tracing differences and conflicts among different groups of women across these archival materials, I argue that consciousness-raising was a literacy practice with flexible do-it-yourself guidelines, tailored for each group's needs and geographic location. As such, consciousness-raising groups connect to a history and tradition of women's collective rhetorical practices that feminist historiographers have recently established. Like clubwomen of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, consciousness-raising groups fit a historical pattern of women's collective literacy practices—practices that are repeatedly erased from historical narratives.

In my second chapter, I argue that one of the main purposes of consciousness-raising groups was for women to reflect on and take control over their own self-definitions by exploring rhetorical constraints in their lives. In contrast to earlier historical women's groups, consciousness-raising groups insisted on care and exploration of the *self* in relation to community as a reason to come together. However, in order to explore and develop their own self-definitions, women had to identify the ways they internalized discourses that portrayed women's self-care as selfish. After establishing consciousness-raising groups as safe spaces, women used practices of self-persuasion much like diary writing or self-talk to convince themselves that internalized discourses were wrong. The established rhetorical trust allowed women to mirror for each other the ways in which they navigated discursive and material conditions. Multiple reflections magnified women's confidence in articulating their own lives from a new perspective and helped in the process of self-persuasion. Using bell hooks' theory on love, I argue women were able to see the self in a new way, and author the self with more positive characteristics to make more calculated and informed choices. However, this simultaneous focus on the self in a larger culture that confuses self-love with selfishness, is, I argue, part of the reason consciousness-raising has been misremembered and misunderstood.

The act of self-persuasion in consciousness-raising groups assisted in the process of social persuasion and self-authorized public engagements to achieve this social persuasion. Chapter 3 demonstrates how, while second-wave feminists were changing stories about the self, they were also making knowledge about the world. I illustrate how

this process allowed women to make collective knowledge that gave them authority to argue not only for themselves in rhetorical situations, but also for larger cultural and political change. Using the case of domestic and sexual violence, I show how feminists used consciousness-raising to produce new knowledge, and then act in the world to make change through efforts such as organizing conferences, writing books, changing laws, investigating emergency room policies, developing physical education programs for women, and establishing rape crisis centers.

Chapter 4 returns to the problem of academic and popular memory, aiming to remember consciousness-raising differently. This chapter traces the trope of the bra-burner across numerous media over five decades to illustrate how this image has enabled the public to disregard feminist scholarship and activism in the contemporary moment. Engaging with recent feminist scholarship on public memory, I argue that the figure of the bra burner represents a rhetorical technique of forgetting that constrains our collective notions of public activism in the present day. Demonstrating that the image of the bra-burner is maintained and remembered through rhetorical techniques of division and correction, I use the concept of feminist recitation to re-narrate consciousness-raising—the heart of the women's movement—with the language of literacy to situate second-wave feminism in a narrative that legitimizes and appreciates the work completed in that era.

Finding Consciousness-Raising in the Archives

To investigate my initial questions about consciousness-raising, I visited three different archival sites: Duke University's Women's Liberation Movement Collection,

University of Illinois at Chicago's National Alliance of Black Feminists Collection, and the Chicago Public Library's Vivian Harsh Research Collection. Using diverse genres—transcripts, promotional materials, reflective and instructive essays, photographs, newsletters, and books produced by such practices—I argue that consciousness-raising, a practice often referred to as the heart of the Women's Liberation Movement, was a method that engendered politically potent literacy practices for women. As scholars have demonstrated, archives themselves are constructed sites of historical memory. They are privileged academic sites—the "houses of history"—spaces difficult to access without knowledge of what archives are and where they are housed and difficult to visit without financial support when materials are not digitized (Booth 17). Furthermore, archives require an incredible amount of time and patience to sift and search through, to find and make connections in the meaning of such materials.

My search into different archival sites took me back to the regular book stacks at the university library. There I collected numerous texts published in the late 60s and early 70s on feminism and consciousness-raising, and used these texts as primary materials for this dissertation. Notably and unfortunately, more than one of these books literally disintegrated in my hands as I read them. Pages fell away as the binding lost resolve. I kept remnants of books in zip-loc bags to keep pages together in one place. I read these physically deteriorating books as indicative of the haunting presence of some of the very valuable practices of second-wave feminism. These texts used in my dissertation sitting in the regular library stacks in original editions, were only discovered after the archives pointed the way to their ordinary, almost invisible, spaces. Like the obscured history of

consciousness-raising, the materiality of these books points to a need to remember second-wave feminist and its rhetorical practices differently.

CHAPTER II

THE LITERACY PRACTICES OF CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING GROUPS

> Nothing in the field of literacy theory is more important than looking and looking again at the role of an awareness of awareness, of thinking about thinking, of interpreting our interpretations.
> –Ann E. Berthoff "Foreword" xi *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World.*

At the beginning of his commencement speech given to Kenyon University in 2005, David Foster Wallace tells the anecdote of fish in water, or rather, fish recognizing what water is. The story goes something like this: an older fish swims by two younger fish and says "Morning, girls! How's the water?" and swims off. One of the younger fish looks at the other and says, "What the hell is water?" For Wallace, the point of this story is that some of the most ubiquitous and present aspects of life are often those overlooked. Wallace proceeds to make an argument for the value of reflective or meta-cognitive thinking, or about noticing the way we see and perceive the occurrences around us, the situations we are in. In addition, he highlights the fact that humans have some control over the way they engage with the world, or at least can think about the way that they engage in the world.

In a similar way, in a document explaining and promoting second-wave feminist consciousness-raising meetings, Lee Walker suggests the metaphor of smelling paint fumes is a useful way to understand the process of coming to awareness that occurs during consciousness-raising sessions. She suggests that when you first walk into a freshly painted room, you are intensely aware of the new paint. But if you live above a

paint factory, "you may have to sniff, leave and return, and/or have a medical checkup up to detect the fumes and their effects" (1). Her story, like Wallace's, points to those pervasive aspects of life that humans unconsciously become accustomed to and may not even be aware of, let alone question and consider changing. While Wallace's overall emphasis is on the individual attempting to make conscious decisions to rethink how she perceives particular situations, Walker moves one step further arguing not only for the conscious and reflective thought of the individual, but also advocating for making changes in one's environment that will assist that individual and others in living the most fulfilling life possible. These two anecdotes portray comprehension and knowledge as interpretive, dependent on the location and experience of subjects. They also portray knowledge as malleable. As Ann E. Berthoff argues in the epigraph, what is most important about literacy is being aware of our interpretations and reinterpreting those interpretations when necessary.

This chapter examines the literacy practices of consciousness-raising meetings, the most fundamental and significant work of the Women's Liberation Movement. I demonstrate how these informal literacy practices allowed women to produce a new body of knowledge based on women's experiences. This chapter situates second-wave feminist consciousness-raising groups in the United States as part of a tradition of women's extracurricular literacy practices, or those that they pursue outside educational institutions. Moreover, this chapter illustrates how feminist consciousness-raising meetings were based on the premise that the cultural constructions of sex and gender were commonly accepted interpretations about the ways human beings should interact,

work, and care. Women in consciousness-raising groups read their personal experiences in conjunction with outside texts to become aware of the similarities among women and to rethink how cultural constructions of gender and sex should be understood and enacted. Finally, this chapter illuminates the importance of memory, both popular and academic, when considering the impact of the activist practices of second-wave feminism. This knowledge replaces the common lack of awareness about what occurred in consciousness-raising meetings resisting representations of consciousness-raising as group therapy, women complaining, or the spaces where women examined their vaginas in mirrors. Ultimately, I demonstrate how consciousness-raising groups were strategically devised spaces to practice literacy, to identify and critique dominant interpretations of the world, and to compose new and more fitting interpretations, and explore how these groups can remind us of the important and serious work ordinary women completed at this historical moment.

A Tradition of Women's Literacy Practices

Second-wave feminists saw their work in consciousness-raising groups as contributing to and continuing a tradition of nineteenth-century women's clubs. In an academic essay reflecting on the strengths and limitations of second-wave feminism, "The Women's Liberation Movement: Its Origins, Structures and Ideas," feminist and scholar Jo Freeman writes the following in reference to consciousness-raising groups:

> This phenomenon is. . .similar to the nineteenth century development of a multitude of women's clubs and organizations around every conceivable social and political purpose. These organizations taught women political skills and eventually served as the primary communication network for the spread of the suffrage movement. Yet after the great crusade ended most of them vanished or

> became moribund. The rap groups are taking their place and will serve much the same function for the future development of this movement. (3)

While Freeman points to first-wave feminism, the suffrage movement, as the end of the social and political work of clubwomen, and argues that second-wave feminism is picking up where they left off, feminist rhetorical scholar Wendy B. Sharer has demonstrated how women's clubs continued to do important work after the suffrage movement. The examination of literacy practices of clubwomen and other collectives of women during the nineteenth century is a subfield of feminist rhetorical studies (see Gere; Sharer; and Royster), and I argue the claims and approaches to literacy that these scholars take reveals how consciousness-raising groups are in fact part of a long tradition of women's collective literacy practices.

Feminist rhetorical scholars have recently turned their attention toward histories of women's group literacy practices, most of which occurred outside of academic institutions. Consciousness-raising literacy practices include women articulating their experiences, identifying gender problems, thinking through those problems, and developing tentative strategies in order to take action and work to solve those problems. All of this occurs through accessing information in the world around them and through engagement with texts—in other words, through literacy practices. These are practices that reflect feminist rhetorical theories, where literacy is more than reading: it is a rhetorical socio-cognitive ability that includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening, an idea that I will explore in more detail below.

Research on the tradition of women's collective literacy practices begins with Jane Donawerth's work on women's collective rhetorical theories from the seventeenth-century until the twentieth-century. Donawerth argues that a tradition of women's rhetorical theories exists and that these theories emphasize "communication as conversation from the perspective of women's experience" (12). According to Donawerth, the women's theoretical tradition emphasized 1) collaborative and consensual communication; 2) listening; 3) an understanding of gender in relation to rhetorical strategy; 4) embodied rhetoric; and 5) alternative relationships between speaker and audience (16). However, for Donawerth, at the end of the nineteenth century, once women were accepted into academia and began writing textbooks for mixed gender audiences, this tradition "disappeared" (2).

While Donawerth sees the tradition she highlights as fading, other scholars have continued to illustrate historical women's groups that have functioned as spaces for women to practice literacy and rhetoric, and as a result create political, cultural, and material change. Though many of these historical groups did not explicitly identify themselves as practicing literacy, scholars have found that literacy was central to their meetings and purpose. In *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women's Clubs, 1880-1920*, Anne Ruggles Gere demonstrates how clubwomen enacted cultural influence through literacy practices. Gere focuses on how the particular space of women's only clubs allowed women to have authority over their reading and writing practices, to develop authority over their own self-representation, and to speak back to national conversations concerning topics like immigration, economy, gender politics,

among others. Similarly, In *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*, Jacqueline Jones Royster demonstrates how African American women in the nineteenth-century incorporated literacy into their lives and used it as a tool to make material change. Wendy Sharer, mentioned above, also highlights histories of women's literacy practices in her work *Vote and Voice: Women's Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915-1930*, which calls attention to literacy practiced in women's organizations in the early twentieth century. Investigating collective literate practices of women's groups like The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the League of Women's Voters (LWV), Sharer highlights how they used collective literacy practices to challenge structures of political discourse *after* the passage of the 19th amendment. Her work acknowledges and highlights a continuing tradition that, according to Donawerth, faded at the turn twentieth century.

Contrary to contemporary formal educational discourses that define literacy narrowly as the ability to decode and encode the alphabet, feminist rhetorical scholars have used an expanded definition of literacy to account for the rhetorical dimensions of knowledge production and to account for groups of people, such as women, whom have been historically excluded from participating in formal literacy practices. As Deborah Brandt assesses: "This narrower approach has been faulted for treating literacy as if it were a decontextualized skill, neutral, self-contained, portable, a skill that can be acquired once and for all and used and measured transparently without regard to contextual conditions" (4). In other words, while this definition of literacy serves the purpose of maintaining and regulating bodies of knowledge, as well as teaching and

learning practices, it also ignores that literacy is rhetorical—that literacy is dependent on the triangular construction of reader, text, and message in a particular context. The narrow, skilled-based definition then distinguishes literacy skills from the rhetorical exigency that elicits them and the power dynamics in which they operate. It also supposes that discourse itself is a neutral medium, rather than a rhetorical interpretation developed by a certain speaker at a particular time for a particular purpose. In contrast, feminist scholars identify literacy as socio-cognitive ability: "It is the ability to gain access to information and to use this information variously to articulate lives and experiences and also to identify, think through, refine, and solve problems, sometimes complex problems over time" (*Traces* Royster 45).[4] This definition provides access to historically excluded groups, and also offers new bodies of knowledge and perspectives of already established bodies of knowledge by including such groups. Moreover, this definition expands the definition of text, and includes speaking and listening—a definition that mirrors those by Paulo Freire and Donald Macedo who in 1987 made a case for how reading the world affects reading the word and vice versa.[5] "Reading" is a kind of looking and interpreting, a gaze in which someone makes meaning that is available to them in their surroundings and based in her own experience.

Literacy, as defined above, attends to an individual's surroundings and environment. Thus, social location matters in literacy practices, and not only because literacy has been used to exclude different groups of people. Literacies, as Brandt

[4] Wendy Sharer also uses Royster's definition of literacy, quoted on page 9.
[5] Brandt agrees that literacy best understood in a broader definition, calling literacy a resource. She notes, "From a contextual perspective, literate abilities originate in social postures and social knowledge that begin well before and extend well beyond words on a page (4).

demonstrates, are practices in the production and reproduction of bodies of knowledge so to be excluded from literacy practices is also to be excluded from the ability to produce widely accepted and legitimated knowledge. Bodies of knowledge are also connected to social location, based in experiences of the power to speak and to be heard. I follow Royster, when she argues that knowledge production must be thought of kaleidoscopically. That is, different perspectives based on differences in subject position should be treated as in conversation with one another, "as critical pieces of the whole" ("When the First Voice" 1121). Rather than let historical voices speak authoritatively about "truth," different groups need to be able to use their own literacy practices to produce their own additions to the critical whole, as well as counter-knowledges and practices that best represent and express their lived realities. Another way to describe counter-knowledges is as counter stories.

This production and reproduction of knowledge and narrative—the production and reproduction of interpretations of the world—is evidence of particular kinds of power, some of which function to regulate and discipline individuals and communities. Freire claims that oppressive regimes impose a static, fixed reality, and feminists acknowledge the same dynamic of discourse and power. Power can be used to name reality for others and exclude others from being able to reshape and interpret such discourses. Beginning with an acknowledgment of how power was utilized in sexist ways, second-wave feminist consciousness-raising practices were very keen to the understanding that language was not neutral and identity mattered to literacy practices. In

guidelines on how to hold one's own consciousness-raising meeting, Kearon explains the meaning-making process and its relation to identity and power:

> The conservation of the status quo is intimately related to a particular interpretation of the world, especially in terms of limits. (The whole idea of 'going to far' involves as acceptance of the oppressors' definition of limits.) The way things are is referred to as REALITY; the prevailing interpretation of the world is known as the TRUTH. If examined, whether from a rational or introspective point of view, it becomes obvious that the logical or psychological cogency of this "truth" depends on nothing so much as the power mobilized behind it. The male interpretation of the world has behind it the army, navy, marines and air force, billions of dollars, intricate bureaucratic traditions, ancient educational institutions and total control over scientific development. That is to say, it is extremely well-organized and institutionalized. Men can afford to say at this point that feminism is a joke and can't fulfill its ends, that women just don't have it and that the way things are and have been clearly attests to this Truth. (2)

In guidelines encouraging women to make their own meaning, Kearon illustrates that "truth" is just another interpretation, one backed by material realities that hold up this "prevailing interpretation" as the only legitimate way to read the world. This highlights not only that interpretations are changeable, but also that material action must be taken to help support counter-knowledges. Kearon demonstrates that the power of discourse depends on the lens and location through which one views the world, much like Royster's insistence on understanding knowledge as perspectival, as critical pieces of a whole.

Additionally, unlike critics of second-wave feminism who often worried that feminists wanted to simply invert the social structure, the guidelines of consciousness-raising groups reveal that feminists advocated literacy practices that were similar to Freire's philosophy of continual dialogue. For instance, the guidelines that Kearon authored insisted that the knowledge produced at consciousness-raising meetings was

both legitimate and tentative. It was not a static and fixed interpretation that others could not amend or revise. Moreover, it was always connected to material reality and attempts to change such reality:

> The group creates its own reality and its own truth. Knowing that reality is whatever is agreed upon by society, the group creates its own society and thereby its own power. Power is the organization of many wills with a common purpose and a common interpretation. The group through its many individuals working together creates an interpretation and then stands collectively behind it. The main thing the groups gives is not a static conceptual understanding but an active interpretation, always including how things shall become and the means for effecting change. (Kearon 2)

Using the literacy practices of consciousness-raising, feminists became aware of the "water" or the dominant *interpretations* of the world. Their literacy practices did not impose a static body of knowledge on others that had to be guarded and assessed for accuracy, but instead reinterpreted dominant, and dominating interpretations. According to Berthoff, this reinterpretation was the most important part of the field of literacy. These literacy practices, because they were guidelines sent out all over the nation and were intended for use by all women, offered women the opportunity to claim a subject position as an active knowledge producer of the world. These feminist rhetorical approaches to literacy gesture towards what Freire calls *conscientizaçao*—a coming to awareness of historical conditions.

It is through literacy practices that one can come to consciousness—become aware of historical and contemporary conditions—and utilize what Louise Rosenblatt calls a linguistic reservoir. In Rosenblatt's triadic meaning-making formulation of text, reader, and context to make meaning, Rosenblatt emphasizes that the reader can be

thought of as a language user that has a personal linguistic reservoir. Noting that language is neither completely public or private, Rosenblatt uses the metaphor of the iceberg to imagine the word user in which the visible tip represents the public aspect of meaning that rests on/is supported by the submerged base of private meaning which is the personal-linguistic reservoir: "For the individual, then, the language is that part of, or set of features, of the public system that has been internalized through that person's experiences with words in life situations" (5). Meaning comes through context. Rosenblatt argues that personal-linguistic reservoirs include:

> Assumptions, attitudes, and expectations about language and about the world, this inner capital is all that each of us has to draw on in speaking, listening, writing, or reading. We 'make sense' of a new situation or transaction and make new meanings by applying, reorganizing, revising, or extending public and private elements selected from our personal-linguistic reservoirs. (5)

So in this sense it is useful to think of the personal-linguistic reservoir as a kind of consciousness. In addition, this consciousness is expanded with increased experience with language and continued literacy practices.

The Literacy Practices of Consciousness-Raising Groups

It is through the above framework that I understand literacy practices of consciousness-raising groups. Consciousness-raising meetings were about identifying dominant cultural narratives and critiquing those interpretations in order to make new meaning that allowed women to access their full humanity. In consciousness-raising meetings women often read two types of primary sources to develop their analysis: 1.) traditional nonfiction texts including essays, newspapers, and monographs; and 2.) their

own personal experience. When reading these different kinds of primary sources women were encouraged to take up specific kinds of critical reading dispositions in relation to the texts.

Before reading these two genres of primary texts, women directed their reading toward a session topic designated by the group. Topics were all based on the accepted and prescribed content area of women's lives, and most consciousness-raising guidelines include a list of topics and questions that other groups might use. Topics listed frequently in consciousness-raising guidelines include: reasons for joining a consciousness-raising group; childhood experiences with gender; adolescent experiences with gender; sex roles; self-image and personality; self-image and body; friendships; love; mothers; fathers; siblings; married life/single life; motherhood; pregnancy and childbirth; abortion; children; sex/pleasure; lesbianism; aging; independence/dependence; ambition; anger/violence; rape; race and racism; religion; health; competition; work; power; money; and reflections on the value and method of consciousness-raising.[6] NABF had lists of topics like the above, but they also had topics that reflected specific engagement with the social location of the overlapping identities of race and gender.

When reading traditional nonfiction texts, women were encouraged to take up a critical reading disposition in which they isolated useful definitions, concepts, and theories for the study of oppression, critiqued those aspects of the texts, and built on the texts by developing their own useful interpretations. For instance, in reading a traditional

[6] When how to guidelines have questions with the topic, all questions are written in second person directing women to reflect on their own lives. Questions include constructions like, "Have you. . ." "How do you. . ." These invited women to articulate personal experience and then reflect on it and analyze it.

text, Carol Hanisch described reading as women thinking for themselves for the first time. She writes, "As the cartoon in Lilith puts it, 'I'm changing. My mind is growing muscles.'. . . .Those who believe that Marx, Lenin, Engels, Mao, and Ho have the only last 'good word' on the subject and that women have nothing more to add will, of course, find these groups a waste of time" (77). Feminists took up reading traditional texts not as a kind of memorizing, knowing, and regurgitating ideas, but as a recognizing meaning and creating new interpretations. This is a strategy of reading texts that inherently affirmed women's perspective and voice. Women were to bring their own experiences to bear on the text—using their linguistic reservoir—to revise and reflect on published interpretations.

While women were encouraged to read any traditional texts and bring them into the synthesizing dialogue, there were also specific texts recommended for analysis. These texts included canonical theory such as Frederick Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* or Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, as well as recent feminist publications. For instance, Claudia Driefus' book on how to hold a consciousness-raising group of one's own comes with a list of suggested readings on various topics and offers recommendations for text selection based on session topic and participating women's social locations. Dreifus and her co-authors recommend Robin Morgan's 1970 *Sisterhood is Powerful* for all consciousness-raising groups, describing Morgan's anthology as "the finest, most comprehensive, most readable of all the Women's Liberation anthologies. If your group uses only one textbook, this one should be it. Base your discussions around personal experiences and articles collected herein"

(261). To supplement Morgan's text, Dreifus and her co-authors also recommend Leslie B. Tanner's 1970 *Voices from the Women's Liberation Movement* because it "contains best selection of consciousness-raising articles of all feminist anthologies" (261). Other texts are recommended on the basis of participating women's social locations, such as Vivian Gornick's 1971 *Women in Sexist Society* particularly for "consciousness-raising groups among university women" (260), and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* for "consciousness-raising groups of housewives" (262).[7]

The traditional non-fiction texts were synthesized with personal experience in the dialogue of consciousness-raising meetings. For instance, in a consciousness-raising transcript on the topic of rape, several of the participants bring up reading outside sources to shore up a conversation about personal experience and to justify new meaning. In response to a dominant narrative that rapists do not repeat crimes, Sue reinterprets a collection of newspaper articles she read.

> Sue: You hear all this crap that the rapists doesn't repeat. That is just not proven. Like I was reading through *The New York Times* and came across these scattered articles, which no one puts together. You read about a man, twenty-two, arrested and twenty women identify him as a rapist. That's twenty women who came forward, in three years. I call that repeating. (NYRF 20)

Sue reinterprets the a dominant narrative that rapists do not repeat by aligning a collection of different articles as evidence that rapists do in fact repeat their crimes. Another participant notes how reading allowed her to understand the concept of

[7] Tanner's book is recommended because it contains the following essays on consciousness-raising: "Feminist Consciousness Raising and 'Organizing'" by Kathie Sarachild; "What Can Be Learned—A Critique of the Miss America Protest" by Carol Hansich; "False Consciousness" by Jennifer Garder; and "Resistances to Consciousness" by Irene Pleslikis (263). Gerda Lerner's *Black Women in White America* is "highly recommended anthology and comprehensive history" (266).

dominance in the crime of rape: "The rapist in rape situations takes all kinds of forms. Until I began reading, it was very unclear to me" (NYRF 21). Helen identifies different forms of dominance rapists take, and Helen's contribution will help in the synthesis dialogue in which the women redefine rape as an act of violence rather than a sexual act.[8]

The second kind of primary sources women read for consciousness-raising meetings were their own personal experiences. Based on the topic chosen for a session, women reflected, recalled, articulated, and read personal experience. In contrast to the traditional nonfiction texts, women were invited to take a different reader's disposition to engage with the text of personal experience. For this genre women were to operate from a stance of acceptance and belief.[9] Rather than criticize and investigate the veracity of these texts, women took articulations of personal experience at face value. The disposition of believing included rules about not interrupting another woman's articulation and allowing every woman to voice her experience. Additionally, two kinds of statements or questions were used in relation to the articulation of primary experience: statements and questions of affirmation and self-reflection. These primary texts were used to affirm a woman's experience and voice and were built on by other participants adding their own personal experience. These articulations of personal experience were then collected and pieced together in order to identify dominant cultural narratives about gender. Hilde Linndeman Nelson uses the term "master narratives" to describe the cultural discourses that contain archetypal plots and stock characters. Nelson posits that master narratives are found "lying about" in our culture and hold a sway over moral imagination. Dominant

[8] See chapter 3 for more in-depth analysis of the transcript on the topic of rape.
[9] See Peter Elbow's "The Believing Game" for more information on operating from a stance of belief.

narratives are usually not explicitly stated in one text, but can be identified through a collection of various parts found in culture. These dominant narratives the women identify and critique are the "water" they find themselves swimming in.

The reader's believing disposition was manifested through statements and questions of affirmation and self-reflection. For example, a consciousness-raising meeting on topic of "work" begins with a woman named Mary articulating her personal experience with work:

> Mary: Quitting wasn't easy. It was very hard to land a job as a writer-editor. Before getting this post, I pounded the pavements for nine months. No one was willing to offer me anything other than secretarial positions, even though I have a master's degree in English. . . .I couldn't stand the way they treated me, which, of course, had everything to do with being a woman. My boss thought of me as dispensable, cheap labor, meaningless to him because of my gender. . . .As a child, everyone in my family assumed I would do earth-shaking things with my life. . . .I guess I was naïve.
>
> Evelyn: What do you mean, you were naïve, Mary? (Dreifus 169)

Mary articulates her personal experience with work, and Evelyn responds with a question that both affirms that she was listening and heard what Mary was saying, but also she asks a question that directs Mary toward a deeper self-reflection. Evelyn does not question Mary's experience, but she does ask to hear more about this experience and Mary's reading of it in order to understand. This encourages Mary to continue, and it validates Mary's speech. Mary explains further that in college she thought "the world is going to be open" to her because "ideas. . . hold no gender." She continues:

> Mary: For nine miserable months I went to every phony employment agency in New York. In the papers they advertised fantastic positions for college grads.

> When I showed up for an interview, the agency people told me I was overqualified for anything they had available. It was their way of saying sorry you're not a man, girlie, 'cause if you were, we'd have a job for you. Some places told me the only the thing they had for women was secretarial stuff, for which they wouldn't think of sending me, the holder of a master's degree. Other places just told me to forget about anything serious in the business world. I finally landed this writer-editor thing by reading the want ads. My boss was looking for a woman because he didn't want to pay a very high salary. He even told me he deliberately hired a woman because he would have been embarrassed to pay a man seventy-eight hundred dollars per year for writing speeches, editing a newsletter, doing public relations, drafting legislation, and writing feature articles. . . .When I think about it, I realize I might not have been as bugged about the low salary of the job if I had been treated as an equal by my boss in other ways. (Dreifus 170-171)

Mary continues to analyze why she would describe her younger self as naïve. She thought that gender did not matter in the world of ideas. Then she continues to elucidate how much gender at this time did matter for her in attempting to get a job that was challenging, financially rewarding, and would provide her with some sense of personal satisfaction. Mary continues explaining why she chose to leave, and Susan asks a question encouraging self-reflection. "Susan: Have you thought about going back to teaching?" (Dreifus 171). Earlier Mary mentioned that after college she taught at an elementary school and found it was not to her liking. Susan, like Evelyn, asks a question that demonstrates she heard Mary's articulation of personal experience and that she is invested in helping Mary make sense of her experience. Susan asks a question that points Mary toward considering other immediate answers to the issue of work. Mary reflects and answers, and this articulation begins to identify the dominant cultural narratives about women and work. The articulation of multiple women's personal experiences leads to the identification and refinement of master narratives that have shaped the participants

lives: “Mary: No. . . .it is a profession women are shoved into simply because society thinks it is proper to for women to be around children” (Dreifus 172). Claudia affirms Mary’s identification of a dominant narrative and adds her own personal experience.

This practice is the building up of personal experience—the creation of a litany of evidence to argue that the master narrative exists. After one woman articulated her personal experience that differed from dominant cultural narratives, other women also added their personal experience that also differed from dominant cultural narratives. In this process women were better able to name and understand master narratives. Additionally, the women argued that the multiple iterations of personal experience that defied master narratives were ample evidence that a particular master narrative was indeed in need of revision. For instance, Claudia adds to Mary’s identification that women’s work includes teaching:

> Claudia: Mary is right that society pigeonholes women into teaching. Pedagogy was the place my family tried to shove me into. My family was workingclass [sic]. From the first, I knew economic necessity meant I’d have to work. No one ever fed me any of this nonsense about being a luxurious little housewife with maids and patio parties. (Dreifus 172)

Claudia continues stating she always had two options. According to her family, she would go to Katherine Gibbs School for secretarial work, or if she got good grades she could go to college. However, going to college required that she went for an immediate, practical profession which was identified as teaching:

> Claudia: My family decided I could go to NYU, but only if I made damn sure my education would net me a practical profession. . . . Why? Because teaching is a good profession for a woman, and if your husband ever runs out, you can still

> work while taking care of the kids. . . .my family never really said anything positive to me about work. . . .No one ever said: You're going to have a career. You're going to be great at what you do in life. (Dreifus 173)

Here Claudia adds to the dominant narrative of women and work—showing that part of the reason teaching is seen as woman's career is not only because women are understood to be better with children as Mary mentioned, but also because it allows a woman to work and to take care of her own children at the same time. It assumes a woman's work includes care for progeny, and work outside the home is secondary. Moreover, it situates women's work as something that is done for financial necessity, not a career that is important for participating in society and feeling a sense of personal satisfaction.

Claudia continues with her personal narrative after another question from Victoria, and Lorraine affirms Claudia's story, noting that despite the seventeen-year age difference between the two women, Lorraine had a similar personal experience with work as Claudia. Lorraine was told she could be either a teacher or a "social investigator." Lorraine adds to the identification of dominant narrative of women and work by adding the position of "social investigator" to secretary, teacher, wife, and mother. In this dialogue, the women braid together personal experience while expanding on and exploring a dominant narrative that women were only allowed to do certain kinds of "women's work." They use their personal experience to build up this dominant narrative and show its existence and to demonstrate the power it had to hold sway over many women's imaginations.

Once a master narrative was identified and was being discussed, questions of investigation and verification were used to decipher and contemplate meaning and the

development of the women's composite reinterpretation, which often occurred at the end of consciousness-raising meetings. After Lorraine relates her personal feelings of disgust and hopelessness about her inability to access the kind of work she personally desires, Susan asks an investigative question about the dominant narrative the women are identifying through their dialogue. Investigative questions seek to create further explanation. Susan asked if these negative feelings about work the participants are discussing are limited to only women. Lorraine responds by building on and refining the dominant narrative.

> Lorraine: While a lot of the work possibilities for guys are limited, they still have more options open to them than young women do. Businesses want them as something other than secretaries. Graduate schools are willing to admit them. And there's law school, medical school, officerships in the army waiting for them. . . . But for girls, the choices are strict: teaching, social work, secretarial jobs, or marriage. (Driefus 176)

Lorraine concedes that men do have limited work possibilities, implicitly acknowledging that men have negative feelings in relation to work and work opportunities as well. However, she also shows that there is a difference between men's work limitations and women's work limitations. In this articulation, Lorriane adds nursing to the group's list of women's work. Lorraine begins to articulate and build up the way the women are talking about cultural expectations and values of women and how these translate into work opportunities for women. She continues to refine this dominant narrative by adding, "Girls think you have to be a genius, or nothing" (177). In other words, she also points to the way the dominant narrative of women and work paints the "few" highly successful women, women who make it into male careers, as women who are exceptional—different

and better than the average woman and thus able to fulfill these unusual positions or achieve unusual success. Susan then continues with a personal story that builds on the idea of "genius or nothing" in which she had hopes of being a cartoonist, but gave it up because she was "no Picasso." And Victoria validates the truth of the existence of this dominant narrative, that only genius women can find success outside of the traditional category of women's work, with her own experience training in classical mandolin. Victoria was hoping to have a career in show business, but says she and her parents were very practical about women's work; her father suggested she become a Playboy bunny for financial security, rather than attempt a career using her mandolin training.

The dialogue that occurred during the consciousness-raising sessions was an important literacy practice in which women developed a collective reinterpretation through synthesis of their readings of both genres of primary text, traditional nonfiction texts and personal experience, to identify and critique dominant cultural narratives. As I have shown, group dialogues were based in a notion that all women had important knowledge to contribute to the conversation and how-to guidelines situated women as knowers, immediately affirming women's social location. Freire argues that collective meaning-making is not the "depositing" of ideas into another person, nor the simple exchange of ideas to be consumed. Dialogue is an act of creation: "the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (88). The dialogue of consciousness-raising sessions was an exchange of ideas, a synthesis of traditional non-fiction texts, personal narratives, and master narratives in order to create a new collective interpretation of the world. Like consciousness-raising guidelines that promoted this kind

of democratic dialogue, reflections on consciousness-raising and the best practices of consciousness-raising emphasized the meeting of minds and respect for all women's social locations. For instance, Irene Peslikis writes that an issue that prevents consciousness-raising is "thinking that some women are smart and some women are dumb" (81). Like Freire's dialogue the learners in consciousness-raising sessions occupy "somewhat different spaces"; different social and cultural locations were acknowledged and valued as the women learned from and taught each other through dialogue (*Pedagogy of Freedom* 8).

A portion of a consciousness-raising meeting on the topic of birth control and abortion demonstrates the dialogue between women in a consciousness-raising group. They are critical and difficult discussions in which women disagreed and deliberated. In the meeting, the women identified a master narrative, "All of us seem to be imbued with a Ivory Soap/Gerber's Baby Food mysticism about childbirth" (203). The participants articulate that this narrative decrees that all women should desire to have children. Claudia describes her abortion in 1964 (when it was still illegal) even after Mary and Victoria have expressed that they do not necessarily support the choice to abort.[10] The women openly discuss the difficult and taboo topic of abortion until they reach a collective standpoint. Mary states that Claudia's take on her pregnancy was disagreeable to Mary because Claudia does not refer to her pregnancy as a "life."

[10] I read moments like this in consciousness-raising groups of evidence of the kind of trust and intimacy that the groups developed in order raise their consciousness together, a topic I discuss more in chapter 2.

> Mary: . . . .Your attitudes really bother me. Throughout your whole rap, Claudia, you never once spoke about an awareness of a growing life within you during your pregnancy.
>
> Claudia: Of course I didn't speak of it, Mary. I did not think of the fetus as 'growing life.'
>
> Mary: Well, that's what disturbs me about abortion. . . . life is a mystery. Sure, sure, I agree pregnancy has been over mystified, but it's still a miracle. . . . abortion is an evil—an evil resulting from a worse evil; the fact that women have been denied decent birth control by male scientists.

Mary agrees with the master narrative that the women have identified exists; however, she questions Claudia's approach to understanding her pregnancy. Using the language of religion "mystery," "miracle" and "evil," Mary argues that abortion is morally destructive and harmful, but it is a moral situation that women find themselves in as an effect of the even more morally destructive and harmful scientific denial of women's need for safe and accessible birth control. Susan counters Mary's claim that abortion should be understood through the language of religion:

> Susan: Mary, that's the most ridiculous statement I've heard all evening. Abortion is not an evil, nor is it unnatural. Terminating an unwanted pregnancy is not more unnatural than removing an infected wisdom tooth.

I read Susan's statement that Mary's claim is unfounded as Susan's dislike of framing abortion in religious language. Susan seems to agree with Claudia; both prefer to understand abortion through the language of disinterested science. Mary responds to Susan's statement with vehemence:

> Mary: Bullshit! . . . . As feminists, I think it's important for us not to be glib about the meaning of life. I don't believe in legal bans on abortion. It is, after all, a very intimate and personal problem. But I personally feel it is tragic recourse.

Mary identifies Susan's claim that understanding pregnancy through the language of disinterested science is the most useful for feminists. She argues feminists need to not be complicit in the dominant narrative that all women desire children, but she insists that rejecting that dominant narrative does not mean feminists need to be flippant about respect for life. Their dialogue works toward refining the ending composite reinterpretation. Mary states abortion should be accessible for women, but that does not mean that she cannot feel that it is a terrible situation for a woman to find herself in. Karen counters Mary's use of the word "evil" and Lorraine points out Susan is not considering the other side of the argument when it comes to abortion:

> Karen: Mary, I would part company with you when you say abortion is an evil. The word evil is simply not a part of my personal vocabulary.
>
> Lorraine: Susan, you're really avoiding the possibility that abortion can be negative. I can relate to what Mary feels because I once deliberately forced myself to miscarry. . . .What I'm saying is ending pregnancy, as Mary said, a highly negative act. In my case, society forced me to make a negative decision.
>
> Claudia: I won't deny the validity of Lorraine's experience, but I wish we would stop using words like tragedy and evil when discussing this matter
>
> Victoria: I believe anyone who wants to have an abortion should be permitted to have one, but again, I'm king of sick of feminists telling me there's something wrong with me because I don't want to have abortions. . . .Your attitude and Claudia's is that I have to rid myself of my belief that abortion is wrong, that it is evil.

Karen argues that evil has a kind of connotation that does not best suit the situation, and Lorraine uses her personal experience of forcing herself to miscarry to support Mary's feelings that the end of a pregnancy can be a negative act. Claudia affirms Lorraine's experience and her feeling that it was a negative act, but she argues like Karen that the terms tragedy and evil are too overwrought for the situation. Victoria adds that she believes women should be able to have abortions, but she does not want to be ridiculed for arguing that she personally would never have one. Victoria wants to know why she should have to get rid of the use of religious language to frame her understanding of abortion. The entire conversation is not recorded in this transcript, and so I assume the discussion over this particular issue lasted for some time. Before the transcript ends, Dreifus and her co-authors write, "In the end, Mary brought all sides together by suggesting we were all a little affected by our childhood and religious upbringing. She also agreed that the use of the world evil was unfortunate" (210). In their deliberation on the topic of birth control and abortion, the participants find that understanding their diverse social locations and religious upbringing strongly shape their relationships to the language they were arguing over. They decide to forgo religious language of evil, and turn their attention to a different angle of the topic:

> Mary: What women really need, much more than abortion, is some good preventative medicine. . . .
>
> Victoria: . . . Why hasn't birth control research been made an international priority? After all, every time you pick up a newspaper there is a frightening article about how the 'population bomb' is going to explode.

> Claudia: I suspect the male scientific establishment has ignored fertility because most people who control things in this world have very little interest in seeing things change. (Dreifus 211)

Rather than discussing the degree to which abortion was a neutral medical experience or a destructive moral experience, the participants move the conversation to how to avoid the situation of having to make a choice about abortion in the first place. The women question why science has not made safe and accessible birth control a bigger priority. The women's dialogue illustrates how deliberation and disagreement was an important part of consciousness-raising sessions. The dialogue also reveals the how the women valued understanding identity in meaning-making, and that their own self-reflection of social location allowed them to move conversations into more productive veins.

When consciousness-raising groups are remembered, they are often misremembered as group therapy sessions, groups of women sitting around complaining or "just talking," or women using mirrors to see and learn about the physical anatomy of their vaginas. Each of these characterizations trivialize consciousness-raising, the central act of the Women's Liberation Movement. By framing the work of consciousness-raising as inconsequential, even silly, the whole movement is also disregarded as quaint. Illustrating and naming the literacy practices of consciousness-raising recites consciousness-raising as a legitimate and effective practice and thus acknowledges the work of women in this time period as important and consequential to the present day.

CHAPTER III

SETTING THE STAGE, RHETORICAL REHEARSALS, AND SELF-PERSUASION

Rhetorical scholars have developed concepts of rhetorical self-fashioning—the articulation, contemplation, invention, and cultivation of rhetorical self—most often discussed in the study of journal and diary writing or self-talk. Vicki Tolar Collins, in "Account of the Experience of Hester Ann Rogers," uses the concept of rhetorical self to call attention to "the primary nature of suasion in constructing and perpetuating our selves-in-society" (qtd. in Harrison 15). She argues "the actual writing of the journal entries constitutes a sort of self-rhetoric, a spiritual discipline that records the soul's journey, and, in the act of recording, persuades the writer of her faith in relationship with God—what we might call a writing to believe" (Collins 113). In her study of privileged Southern women's diary entries during the Civil War, Kimberly Harrison notes that diary entries are "rhetorical rehearsals," acts of self-persuasion and self-image maintenance in which women envisioned themselves in future public rhetorical contexts and made decisions about how they would engage rhetorically (171). For Harrison, "The physical act of putting pen or pencil to coherent meaning helped diarists focus on their devotions during tumultuous times and give order to their thoughts" (134). In consciousness-raising groups women articulated their personal experience verbally in front of a group of other women. I argue that through those verbal articulations, in conjunction with the group analysis of dominant narratives, women in consciousness-raising groups began to

practice self-persuasion similar to the acts written about by Collins and Harrison. Rather than addressing themselves in the pages of a journal, women in consciousness-raising groups addressed the faces of other women; they had affirming witnesses. In consciousness-raising sessions women began to revise narratives of self that constructed the self in a positive self-image.

Consciousness-raising meetings were understood as "a place for self examination" (Women's Action Alliance 2). This self-examination was understood to lead to the development of a stronger sense of self or a self-definition that was based on a woman's personality, rather than her allegiance to dominant narrative constructions of her self. For instance, in a consciousness-raising group on the topic of motherhood, a woman named Judy describes how her identity as wife and mother eclipsed other identities that were important to her personally. Judy maintains, **"**I was known as John's wife and Kathleen's mother back in Kansas. Once I was first and foremost that, and always in the eyes of the world. Anything else I was, was only a footnote, no matter how important it was to me" (New York Radical Feminists). Judy points out how in a patriarchal cultural logic[11] women are primarily seen and valued in relationships to men and children within the domestic sphere. Her statement that other roles that she fulfilled were supplemental, and possibly overlooked, compared to her main roles as wife and mother illustrates how other roles for women which might be important *for* a woman *from* a woman's perspective, were not valued by dominant discourses, if those roles were even visible and recognizable to others. In a similar vein, members of The Boston

[11] According to Krista Ratcliffe a cultural logic "is a belief system or way of reasoning that is shared in a culture" (10).

Women's Health Collective identify four different cultural scripts for femininity that they all felt shaped and influenced by: "woman as inferior, woman as passive, woman as beautiful object, woman as exclusively wife and mother." Like Judy, members of the Boston Women's Health Collective identify the trouble with these cultural scripts for femininity as "humanly limited." The limitations were severe and many women said it made them view themselves as "dependent creatures, with no identities of our own" (7). The Women's Action Alliance argues that socialization teaches women to "seek definition of themselves through men." In consciousness-raising groups, then, women used self-examination and worked together to revise articulations about the self in order to develop self-definitions that did *not* rely on men or dominant male interpretations of the world.

Because much feminist organizing at this time was done along ethnic and racial divides (see Roth), these self-examinations especially centered on intersections of gender and race for members of the National Alliance of Black Feminists (NABF). For instance, in an interview for an article in *Chicago Defender*, a Black Chicago newspaper, Louisa Hunt said that consciousness-raising "gave her an opportunity to express herself, to see who she is as a black woman." This is in contrast to other groups she had participated in that were "designed to keep wives busy." Similarly, Evelyn Tolliver described consciousness-raising sessions as "a place to express her ideas from a black women's [sic] point of view" ("Viewpoint: 3 women's groups'").

From a theoretical perspective, the above comment made by Judy reveals that the subject position she occupies—woman—affects how others read, understand, and value

her speech and embodied actions. To understand the complexity of human difference and communication across identity difference, Jacqueline Jones Royster insists, "'subject' position really is everything" ("When the First Voice" 1117). Royster asserts that subject positions are most usefully constructed as terministic screens when studying communication across difference. In the construction of subject positions as terministic screens, "voice" is a significant manifestation of subjectivity. To avoid the silencing of groups not afforded the authority to make meaning, Royster insists that meaning-making be understood as interpretive: "Using subject position as a terministic screen in cross-boundary discourse permits analysis to operate kaleidoscopically, thereby permitting interpretation to be richly informed by the converging of dialectical perspectives" ("When the First Voice" 1117). In consciousness-raising groups, women began to develop a feminist interpretation of the world, beginning with the subject position racially identified woman.[12]

This chapter uses an analytical method of understanding subject positions as terministic screens that produce knowledge from a point of view as a critical piece of a whole. Taking up Judy's footnote metaphor, I compare women's roles to texts or narrative constructions in order to reveal the fluid and constructed process of identity formation and rhetorical self-persuasion. Hilda Lindemann Nelson argues that identities "are complex narrative constructions consisting of a fluid interaction of the many stories and fragments of stories surrounding the things that seem most important, from one's

[12] Black and Chicana feminists were most likely to use consciousness-raising to discuss racial identity in conjunction with gender identity. Some white women's groups did investigate race through exploring their own internalized racism.

own point of view and the point of view of others, about a person over time" (20). As ongoing fragmented stories, understandings of the self can be revised through changes in the narrative constructions.

When Royster uses the analytical lens of subject position as terministic screen she focuses on "contact zones," where differences, and the power dynamics that come with those differences, shape the nature of who and what can be heard, understood, and believed. Consciousness-raising groups were strategically developed safe spaces with carefully directed audiences so that women could do the work of self-persuasion without being silenced by groups with more cultural authority to speak. In consciousness-raising groups, attention was directed at the self to build up a sense of self, and in this chapter I read the important manifestation of that self: voice. The building up of this sense of self was conceived as a kind of ethics of self-care that was part of community care. However, because of cultural logics surrounding the subject position of woman, rhetorical claims about the value of work on the self were often met with the accusation that women's self-care is selfish.

The Development of Safe Spaces and an Affirming Audience

Historically, women have been socialized to be seen, not heard. Cheryl Glenn writes "For the past twenty-five hundred years in Western culture, the ideal woman has been disciplined by cultural codes that require a closed mouth (silence), a closed body (chastity), and an enclosed life (domestic confinement)" (1). Therefore self-persuasion and self-revision required the construction of a safe space and the development of trust among members of groups. The creation of a safe space that encouraged women to speak

about their expected cultural roles was utterly important because within the value system of patriarchal society, women are expected to serve others' needs first and their own needs second. Women's collectives of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century tapped into this expectation for women to serve others first; they used stereotypical beliefs of the "innate/natural" characteristics of womanhood as a successful rhetorical reasoning to intervene in political and social life. For instance, Sharer explains how women's organizations would often use religious justifications and common understandings that women's role in the private sphere as mothers and providers of care gave them a special perspective. In order to engage in the politics and decisions about the community, these groups argued women have a particular responsibility to ameliorate social concerns that "threatened the family, woman's chief concern and her area of expertise" (17). Women could be heard through pleas for "protection of the home." These women's groups appealed to beliefs that "women were by nature more compassionate and morally pure than men" (17).

Unlike earlier women activists, second-wave feminists[13] critiqued the relationship of the public sphere and politics to the domestic sphere was critiqued and reinterpreted. As Kristan Poirot notes, "Initially developed through consciousness-raising groups,

[13] Second-wave feminists used rhetorical strategies that engaged with stereotypical beliefs about sex and gender. Poirot points out how 20th century women's groups, like second-wave feminists, deployed sex in rhetorical ways, "feminist movements had both productively challenged and amplified sex in their attempt to change women's lives" (Poirot 5). She demonstrates the term "sex" has been central for feminist movements and it is paradoxical and situational term, one we need to think of it rhetorically because in feminist movements it has been both the subject that is questioned and simultaneously insisted on to garner support for feminist activism.

radical feminism used 'the personal is political' as a way to theorize the private sphere—the sphere 'left untouched by liberal political theory'—as in fact political, public, and 'riddled with power relations'" (102). Consciousness-raising groups critiqued the power dynamics that shaped domestic roles like mother, wife, and romantic partner and attempted to revise these roles and create alternative roles for women to take up to rhetorically engage both in the domestic and public spheres. Feminists describing a lack of sense of self and internalized guilt for not being happy in their current position also reveal the layers of silencing the women had to work through to make their own meaning.

When women did speak up about their dissatisfaction with the roles and relationships within the domestic sphere, they found unwilling audiences that did not affirm or accept their voice. For instance, Pamela Allen writes how the power of her consciousness-raising group, Suddosfloppen, was that it gave women an audience they never had before. She explains how the experience of not being heard or listened to was common for many women trying to articulate their own needs and desires:

> Every woman who has tried to articulate her loss of a sense of identity to her husband knows the despair of not being understood. Any woman who has tried to explain her driving need to have a life of her own and sees her words falling on the incomprehending ears of family and friends knows the horror of being alone, being seen by others as some kind of freak. Any woman who has admitted that she is unhappy and depressed but can't explain why, knows the pain of not being taken seriously. (Allen 24)

For the acts of self-persuasion to occur, the consciousness-raising group needed to be a safe space where women were able to develop trust and intimacy with each other. Guidelines for how to hold consciousness-raising meetings outline several suggestions

that would assist in the process of developing a safe space physically and emotionally. These suggestions included ideas about who could participate, where the group should meet, and how the group should conduct meetings to ensure that participants felt comfortable enough to speak up in order to articulate personal experiences, critique dominant discourses, explore other options, and persuade the self of her value in a new interpretation of the world.

One of the first steps of consciousness-raising was simply getting a group of women to come together. Over and over again, the purpose and value of having "women only" consciousness-raising groups was linked to the claim that women, as a class, were isolated from each other. Consciousness-raising was a movement from isolation to connection and commitment to the group. The understanding that women were separated from each other sought to challenge stereotypes that women did not like other women and dominant narratives that socialized women to see males as protectors. For instance, Pamela Allen, a member of a California consciousness-raising group, argues that consciousness-raising groups worked against the stereotype that "women can't work together" and women "don't like one another" (27). Similarly, the Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, based in California and Florida, suggests one of goals of consciousness-raising groups is to break down barriers between women to offer better communication (*A New View of a Woman's Body*). The New York Radical Feminists posit women are conditioned "to view males as. . . protectors and every other woman as potential rival" and so "it may be that the simple act of communication among women becomes a radicalizing process" (*Rape Sourcebook* 6). The Women's Action Alliance, a

New York based groups, note that in addition to being taught to distrust other women, women have been taught "to see marriage as the ultimate form of happiness and fulfillment, and to be both emotionally and economically dependent on the various men in our lives" (Women's Action Alliance). Understanding subject position as primary to the study of communication and knowledge production helps uncover why the act of getting women together in a woman's only group is important. The subject position of woman has less access to authoritative discourses and to the right to speak.[14]

Bringing a group of people together eliminates a key layer of power dynamics, namely the presence of individuals operating from subject positions that *do* have greater access to power and individuals who are not invested in rhetorical listening or alternative interpretations. As feminists at this time themselves argued, women are a class of people who are intimately connected to the class of men who benefit from ideologies that promote and perpetuate women's subordinate position. This class relationship is quite different from the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat for instance. In the introduction to her anthology of second-wave feminist writing, a text often recommended for consciousness-raising groups, Robin Morgan quotes a feminist collective who used Marxist theory to identify women as a "class" of people. Consciousness-raising, then, was seen as important because it created a safe space for women to come together to discuss their personal experiences and discover larger patterns, to develop group consciousness:

[14] This is complicated even further as one begins to attend to intersectional identities: woman of color, poor woman, trans* woman, etc.

> Women are the only oppressed people whose biological, emotional, and social life is totally bound to that of the oppressors. We must provide a place for women to be friends, exchange personal griefs [sic], and give their sisters moral support—in short, develop group consciousness. (as quoted in Morgan xxix)

This approach references Marxist theory in which a class is a group of people having a common relation to the means of production, who can use this to organize in active pursuit of their group interests. If women are socialized to be silent, and are socialized to put others' needs before their own, then it follows that women are also less likely to speak up for themselves. Removing those who might silence them changes the power dynamics of the space of communication. A first step in self-persuasion is removing internalized guilt for not being satisfied with the current social system.

By removing this layer of power dynamics in the rhetorical situation, feminists made self-persuasion more attainable. Thus, feminists insisted that consciousness-raising groups be women only. "We needed this protection because we have been trained to be other directed, shaping our personalities to fit other people's expectations" (Allen 59). Men who wanted to help or participate were advised to participate by "helping to take care of the house or children so that women will be free to participate" (Women's Action Alliance 2). Interested men were encouraged to develop their own consciousness-raising groups exploring the constraints of masculinity. Men were not allowed because earlier experiences of mixed gender consciousness-raising groups demonstrated that even well-meaning men often paternalistically took over conversations, became an enemy for some women in the group to persuade or attack, or made some women feel uncomfortable with sharing their experiences. In short, prior experiences with mixed gender consciousness-

raising groups, in addition to women's experiences with men in their personal and public lives, convinced women that women truly were a class of individuals who had a different relationship to means of production, and thus women had a different relationship with men than they did with other women.

Consciousness-raising did not only develop around a separation between men and women. They also developed around a separation between different races because of the power dynamics attached to race and voice. As Roth argues, this particular time there was a general ethos of "organizing one's own." Members of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) and National Alliance of Black Feminists (NABF) who acknowledge the "political relationship of women, as a caste, to a society as a whole" ("Black Feminism—A New Directive"), insisted that their consciousness-raising groups were for black women only; white women and black men were not allowed. Brenda Eichelberger, a member of NABF, writes about how various black women had participated in interracial consciousness-raising groups and been satisfied and remained with these groups, while others found that these interracial groups did not meet their needs. So the ability for women to choose a group where they felt more comfortable reveals the importance of comfort and safe space for the practice of self-persuasion. Additionally, Eichelberger highlights that when she learned of interracial groups in the early stages of formation she informed any member of NABF she thinks might be interested. However, NABF promoted black women's only consciousness-raising groups for the sake of creating a safe space:

> There are those Black women among us who have never been in a cr [sic] with white women and have indicated they think they would be a little uncomfortable joining one at present. . . .The whole point is that women, regardless of their race, need to be in a consciousness-raising session with women with whom they can feel relaxed and free.

Black men and white women were not allowed in NABF consciousness-raising groups because of their intersectional differences: black men could not fully identify with black women because they did not experience sexism, white women could not fully identify with black women because they did not experience racism. To protect their focus on the intersections of race and gender in NABF consciousness-raising groups, individuals that occupied subject positions that have historically silenced African American women were not allowed ("Black Feminism—A New Directive").

In order to create the conditions where trust and intimacy might develop in a consciousness-raising group there were overall guidelines about number of participants, timing, and location. Overall, consciousness-raising guidelines suggested having between 5-15 members for the purposes of developing trust and safe space among women. The smaller number made it possible for groups to meet in each other's homes, and for all women to have multiple opportunities to speak up during the sessions that were held for two to three hours. Having a space where all women could speak multiple times was important because women were socialized to be silent. The number of participants, the opportunity to speak, and the length of the meetings were all necessary components to make consciousness-raising groups safe spaces where the development of trust and intimacy could occur.

Another way that guidelines for consciousness-raising suggested building a safe space is by the atmosphere and space they encouraged. Consciousness-raising groups were to be held in individual's homes and rotate to each individual's home. Food and beverage was encouraged. In her description of how her own group developed trust and intimacy, Pamela Allen writes that these practices had importance for group cohesiveness. Allen's group developed trust through the act of consistently sharing meals together:

> I remember that my first trust in the group developed through seeing the women bring the food for the dinners we had together before our meetings. In those early days I was distrustful of our talk about love and unwilling to trust my whole self with a group of strangers, but I was willing to risk a meal. And the fact that I never went hungry—week after week—made me begin to trust that we could begin to feed each other's need for a place to be taken seriously and for a space to learn about ourselves and grow in understanding and strength. (18)

The physical nourishment of meals and the consistency of that nourishment made it possible for Allen to develop emotional and intellectual trust in her consciousness-raising group. Allen also describes this as being able to take a small risk; each time she was consistently rewarded for taking a small risk allowed her to begin to trust her group, which in turn allowed for her to take larger risks such as speaking about private and taboo personal experiences. Allen writes, "Trust is sustained and grows through seeing each other act responsibly towards the group" (18). Allen identifies practices such as attending meetings regularly, arriving on time for meetings, calling ahead if someone is going to be late, telling the group ahead of time if one member was unable to attend, and working

together to care for children as practices that helped develop a sense of trust in a consciousness-raising group.

Holding the meetings in each other's homes was part of the process of developing intimacy and trust. "Giving shelter to the group, seeing it function in rooms we live with intimately, is part of the process" (Women's Action Alliance). Allowing people into one's home allows others to see the intimate details of someone's life in terms of material possessions, which reveals class and personality through architecture and décor. Homes are private places and places of casual interaction, loving interaction and have been traditionally the site where women are in charge in terms of shaping the space—so there was a layered sense of control afforded to the women in these spaces. Here the domestic space is used to help women break free of their domestic roles and spaces are instead used for exploring alternatives and critiquing traditional roles. By having consciousness-raising in a domestic space, the cultural logic of the space is subverted, allowing women to see themselves anew within that space.

The guidelines empowered individual women through practices of shared governance, sequenced discussions (topics), and rhetorical listening. Guidelines on how to hold one's own consciousness-raising group included certain rules about how to conduct consciousness-raising meetings. To emphasize the importance of every woman as a knower and knowledge producer and to counter socialization of women not speaking up, the groups did not have a leader. Instead, it was recommended that a session leader be selected for each meeting, and that the leadership position should rotate among members. Guidelines offered suggestions about topics and timing. They note because of "initial

reserve" it may take "four to six weeks to mesh" (Sappho Collective). Likewise, guidelines suggested starting with lighter topics such as describing childhood experiences with gender. Heavier topics would require that some trust was already developed within the group: "Plunging into heavy topics, such as sex or marriage, in an early session may make some women feel threatened or defensive" ("Woman's Body, Woman's Mind: A Guide to Consciousness Raising" 4). The cardinal rule of consciousness-raising was that a woman should not be interrupted while telling her personal experience, and she should not be challenged about or criticized for her personal experience. Guidelines encouraged each woman to describe her experience in relation to the chosen topic at the beginning of the meeting, and women were not to give advice about a woman's personal experience. Testimony was to be kept confidential. They should not talk about a woman's testimony outside of consciousness-raising group with non-participants.

> This rule of never challenge another woman's experience. . . .is also one of the most important. What a sister says may seem inaccurate to you, but it is true for her at that moment. . . . Keep in mind that she may never have had a chance to talk about herself without being interrupted or challenged. . . .Ask yourself why you feel compelled to challenge her. ("Woman's Body, Woman's Mind: A Guide to Consciousness Raising" 4)

Ultimately, the space of consciousness-raising was designed to be "supportive and non-judging" ("Black Feminism—A New Directive").

Consciousness-raising must have been often misunderstood or criticized as a kind of group therapy because numerous documents argue that consciousness-raising was *not* therapy. While consciousness-raising may achieve some therapeutic ends, feminists insisted consciousness-raising was different from therapy. In therapy the assumption was

that a woman was sick in her unhappiness. A therapist worked with the woman to change the individual to adjust to society. In consciousness-raising groups women were not assumed to be sick or pathological, but knowers. The women used personal experience to analyze society and begin to try to change society and the self. These guidelines provide the conditions for women to begin to articulate their personal experiences and start to see themselves in a new way. In terms of self-persuasion, having other women there witnessing and believing their own articulations encourages women to emerge with revisions of self-articulations. Seeing other women also break silence and speak about the self was encouraging because it fostered a reflexive group nature, if one woman can speak, another can too.

Internalized Consciousness

In consciousness-raising groups feminists worked to identify the ways that they had internalized what Krista Ratcliffe refers to as cultural logics, "a belief system or way of reasoning that is shared in a culture" (10). Women often expressed this cultural internalizing as a sense of guilt. Critiquing and identifying such cultural expectations about gendered roles was part of the work of consciousness-raising groups; however, women had to persuade themselves not to feel guilty in order to participate, and this was in the face of repeated accusations that feminists were very selfish women. Lindal Buchanan illustrates how in a patriarchal cultural logic motherhood is one of the most important ways women are valued. Within this logic, there is a clear connection between mothering and selflessness, where any attention to a woman's self-care or self-concern outside the role of mother *is read as* selfish. She highlights how motherhood is shorthand

for a larger gender system that enables "speakers to sketch immediately identifiable characters—the sainted mother or the selfish career woman" (9). Feminists worked against these discourses to try to persuade the self that they were not selfish if they investigated other ways of being as a woman in a patriarchal society. During organizing and activism, second-wave feminists would be accused of failing to enact their appropriate duties as a citizen. In a New York Radical Feminist Newsletter, Florence Rush describes how a group of women used threats about the impending end of the world to discount a 1974 conference exploring the experiences of motherhood:

> 'How can you talk about motherhood when we could all be blown up tomorrow?' It seems to me that I've always been manipulated into acting against my own best interests in order to prevent some impending disaster—'if you don't stay home and take care of your children, they will become dope addicts and drop out of school!' So know if I do what I want to do such as participating in the only movement that has meaning for me, it will be my fault if the world blows up tomorrow.

Buchanan finds that the term *Mother* exists on a continuum with the term *Woman*, in which Mother is a "god" term and Woman is a "devil" term; both undergird public discourse. She explains the associations with these terms:

> The Mother. . . operates as a god term within public discourse and connotes a myriad of positive associations, including children, love, protection, home, nourishment, altruism, morality, religion, self-sacrifice, strength, the reproductive body, the private sphere, and the nation. Meanwhile, its corresponding devil term, Woman, invokes negative attributes, such as childlessness, self-centeredness, work, materialism, hysteria, irrationality, the sensual/sexual body, and the public sphere. (8)

So when feminists were questioned about their exploration and investigation into motherhood, they were also situated not on the side of positive associations with mother, but on the negative side of woman.

During the decades immediately, 1940s-1950s, before the onset of second-wave feminist activism there was significant discourse that argued bad mothers were the source of most societal ills. Sara Evans points out that in the mid 1940s psychologist Philip Wylie "blamed 'Mom' for all the evils of American society" (4). Critics argued that modern industrialization undermined the home and created a neurosis in women: "According to Wylie, it transformed them into narcissistic 'Moms' who devoured their sons and husbands, robbing them of independence and strength" (4). Moreover, Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg, both Freudian psychiatrists practicing in the late 1940s, highlighted what they considered to be a "'pathological' response in modern women: feminism." In order to combat this "pathological" response, they recommended that women undergo significant psychotherapy. The psychiatrists advocated for the use of governmental propaganda rewarding good mothers and even cash payment to them. In relation to traditional women's tasks like cooking and decorating, they argued that "only through a return to the traditional home, 'a social extension of the mother's womb,' could 'women's inner balance' be reclaimed and the level of hostility in the world be reduced" (qtd. in Evans 4).

Additionally, parent movements of many second-wave feminist groups accused all feminist women's work—whether black, Chicana, or white—of being distracting, diversionary, and disruptive to movement unity. Feminists of all races were accused of

taking away from the real political problems of the various movements they developed from: “Feminist organizing therefore represented selfishness on women’s part” (Roth 64). This was used to reject feminist efforts to create alternative roles for women to occupy. Scholars of the Chicano movement and the emerging second-wave Chicana feminisms, Maylei Blackwell, and Alma M. García, show that Chicana feminists were accused of being selfish by focusing on women’s issues rather than issues of racial equality, farm workers rights, and anti-war organizing. Chicana womanhood is represented as serving others: the “Ideal Woman” of the Chicano Movement was a “strong, long-suffering women who endured social injustice, maintained the family as a safe ‘haven in a heartless world’ for their families, and as a result assured the survival of Chicano culture” (García 6). In contrast, Black women had historically served in active roles in social protest organizations. However, Roth notes that an ideological “masculinist” shift occured when the social base of Civil Rights became younger and more Northern: “an ideological program of advocating middle-class traditional gender roles as a means of remaking revolutionary Black family developed as part of Black Liberation ideology. Black women who had been active in social protest organizations were asked to become merely supportive and secondary to men” (82). Black nationalists argued, “the truly ‘revolutionary’ Black woman was a supportive one, who kept house while the Black man kept revolution, so as to allow him to reclaim his public manhood” (Roth 85). Feminists attempting to expand roles for women were bombarded with assaults on their character as they were accused of selfishness repeatedly while they tried to investigate the domesticate sphere and their positions there.

Consciousness-raising was conceived as an exploration of self in situation, examining relationships that contributed to this sense of self. This exploration with other women was not only to critique dominant images and narratives about women's acceptable roles, but also to persuade the self of what I am calling "the ability to do." For example in a philosophy document on the goals of feminism, New York Radical Feminists asserted:

> For the sake of our own liberation, we must learn to overcome this damage done to ourselves by internalization. We must begin to reverse the systematic crushing of women's egos by constructing alternate selves that are healthy, independent, and self-assertive. We must, in short, help each other to transfer the ultimate power of judgement [sic] about the value of our lives from men to ourselves. (4)

One way that the women worked on self-persuasion was through the development of a reading disposition that accepted the power to evaluate based on their simultaneously emerging reinterpreted set of criteria and values. Scholars like Paulo Freire and Hilde Lindemann Nelson discuss how marginalized groups of people often internalize dominant discourse that construct them as less than. One of the goals of literacy then is to see the self in relation to these discourses and rewrite such rules. Nelson uses the concepts of an "infiltrated consciousness," in which a person is "twice damaged by oppression when she internalizes as a self-understanding the hateful or dismissive views that other people have of her" (21). For Nelson this results "when powerful institutions or individuals, seeing people like her as morally sub- or abnormal, unjustly prevent her and her kind from occupying roles or entering into relationships that are identity-constituting" (20). Similarly, Freire notes, "It's important always to bear in mind that the role of the

dominant ideology is to inculcate in the oppressed a sense of blame and culpability about their situation of oppression" (*Pedagogy of Freedom* 78). For Freire, the dominant ideology foists a fixed and static reality on the oppressed, a reality that discourages and even punishes oppressed people for speaking back or acting to make change. Moreover, women's inculcation and self-blame is evident in consciousness-raising transcripts with repeated articulations of guilt. Take for instance Marylin's frustration at a particular session: "Guilty! Guilty, guilty. Will we ever have a session in which the world guilty is not mentioned once?" (Gornick 67). Notes from the Lucy Stone Brigade, a group based in New York, session also argue that women need to persuade the self to be rid of guilt in relation to the self's needs and desires: "she will not feel guilty about them, nor necessarily try to change them. Having figured out what she needs (and, no less importantly, what she does not need), she will do whatever she can or must to satisfy her needs" (Lucy Stone Brigade). The handwritten notes recording the ideas developed in a consciousness-raising session continue to point out that having these needs met "contributes to the. . .sense of herself as a valid person" (Lucy Stone Brigade). Part of the self-persuasion that occurred in consciousness-raising groups was first to persuade the self to reject the internalization of discourses that socialized a woman as selfish for having needs of her own. Self-persuasion first was about ridding the self of a sense of guilt for the desire for something more.

One of the goals achieved in consciousness-raising groups was the identification of internalized misogynist values about the worth and value of self. Pamela Allen explains that one of the chief enemies dealt with in consciousness-raising groups was

"self-hatred" (62) and "socially prescribed roles that have been unconsciously internalized" (61). Members of the Boston Women's Health Collective describe a sense of being less valuable than men explaining "We lived our lives as if there was something intrinsically inferior about us" (7). In consciousness-raising groups women began to identify the way discourse shaped them and how they had internalized sexist values. Members of the Boston Women's Health Collective articulate some of these internalized values:

> In my home I always had a sense that my father and brother were more important than my mother and myself. My mother and I shopped, talked to each other, and had friends over—this was considered silly. My father was considered more important—he did the real work of the world. (6)
>
> In my home I got a complicated message. On the one hand I was told I was as important and as competent as men. In other ways I was told this was not true. Money was set aside for my brother to go to college but not for me. (7)
>
> I wanted to be a doctor, but I was told in direct and indirect ways that my ultimate ambition should be marrying a doctor and raising a family. I gave up my dream. (7)
>
> I genuinely enjoy loving and raising kids and setting up a home, but I have always felt that it was not important. (7)

Different members of the group internalized discourses that shaped women as secondary or less important than men. One woman articulates that she was seen as engaging in trivial tasks and so her person was not as valuable as her father or her brother because of gender identity. Another woman shares how her education was not as important as her brother's, and she read this as evidence that she was not valued in the same way as he was. A third woman was discouraged from pursuing a well-respected position because of

her gender identity. She was told she "should" desire other alternatives, and this made her feel wrong. A fourth woman articulates her love of homemaking and childcare, but felt the category of women's work suggested that her work, her love, her self were less legitimate than venues of labor categorized as "men's work." They articulate how these discourses have shaped their sense of self or lack there of: "we had no sense of self and had to depend on someone else" (The Boston Women's Health Collective 8).

In identifying internalized sexist values, many women who participated in consciousness-raising groups examined how they "did not really feel ourselves to be separate, independent people" (The Boston Women's Health Collective 10). A distributed pamphlet called "Men and Women Living Together: Diagrams of Some Women's Liberation Discussions," created by a member of the feminist collective Bread and Roses, argues that women felt dependent on men and felt that they lacked a strong sense of self as illustrated in Figure One.

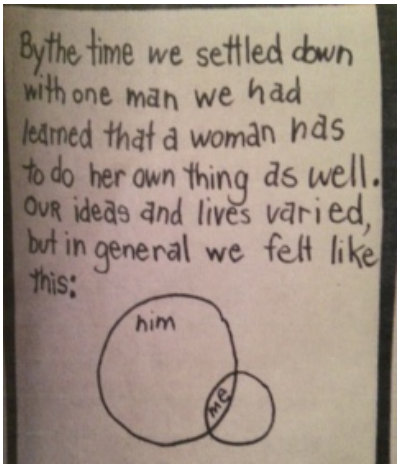

Figure 1. Lacking Sense of Self

These writers argued that changing a sense of self also meant changing sets of relationships and shared understandings that the self operates in. In the Bread and Roses diagram, the women demonstrate a lack of sense of self by illustrating the "me" as the smaller circle, dependent and attached to the more important "him" circle. When they began meeting for consciousness-raising sessions, as Figure Two illustrates, the women are depicted as various kinds of partial, tiny, or non-existent blobs indicating that they did not have a strong sense of self before they came together in consciousness-raising. They felt un-whole and unimportant.

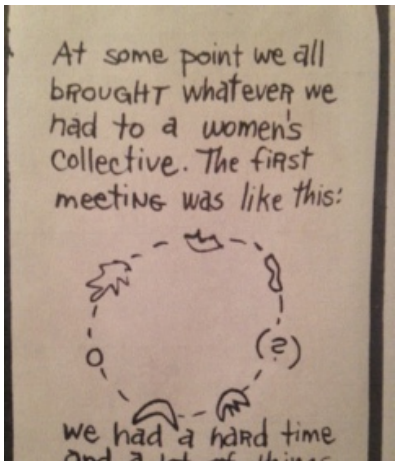

Figure 2. Self at First Meeting

Moreover, bell hooks posits, "sexist socialization teaches females that self-assertiveness is a threat to femininity. Accepting this faulty logic is the groundwork for low self-esteem" (59). I argue we can read these depictions and women's discussion of lack of a sense of self as low self-esteem. Thinking about this in terms of subject positions means that a lack of sense of self is a lack of voice, or perspectival knowledge. It follows that if there is a lack of voice, the subjective self is weak, and is more likely to be interpellated

without resistance by systems of power. So, feminists set up consciousness-raising groups with special rules about creating a safe space and developing an affirming audience in order to develop personal and collective voice. With a safe space and an audience operating from similar accesses to discourses and power, women were more likely able to speak up, and consistently speaking up and being heard and believed allowed women to begin to develop this sense of self and persuade the self of her inherent value.

Self-persuasion

Part of this examination to explore the self in a different set of relationships was to persuade the self of alternative self-images.

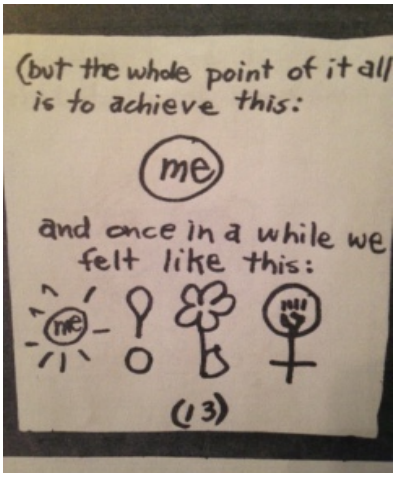

Figure 3. Strong Sense of Self

One of the purposes of consciousness-raising meetings was to persuade the self of the wrongness of dominant discourses that made them feel dependent and unable to choose and act in the world, and to persuade the self that that she was an independent human

being who could feel confident and powerful. The Boston Women's Health Collective describes how consciousness-raising allowed them to begin "building up our own sense of ourselves" in which they "discovered resources we never thought we had" (10). The process of consciousness-raising helped them move beyond "thinking of ourselves as helpless and dependent" (10). The process of developing a sense of self accomplished several things. They expanded cultural notions of what it means to be a woman living in a system that devalues femininity: "We could act on this new sense of self in our lives to create a broader sense of what it means to be female" (5). They developed confidence and learned to speak out: "Probably the most valuable learning for each of us was learning to feel good about speaking for ourselves and being ourselves" (5). The Boston Women's Health Collective articulate the different ways that individuals developed sense of self and began to engage in new activities and crafts:

> I started making batiks again and have become very seriously involved in this craft. . . .each time I have to fight inner voices saying, You are not going to do it. (10)
>
> I decided that I really wanted to learn how to take care and be in control of a car myself. I learned about auto mechanics. (10)
>
> It feels so good not to have to walk around all the time worrying about what my husband, friends, other people are thinking about me. (11)
>
> I have come to realize that in my marriage my husband and I need separate time and space for ourselves to do our own work as well as time to be together. (11)
>
> I was feeling unfocused and had low energy a lot of the time and was very unself-confident in relating to people outside my family. I joined with some friends. . . .and began to learn to be a birth-control counselor. Over the past two years I have found the energy and talent to do this work, and the good people I work with have affirmed me as a person and a counselor. (11)

This self-persuasion that manifested in a changing sense of self in which women felt independent and thus able to take on new crafts, skills, and positions, also required a change in set of relationships. Figure 4 from the Bread and Roses collective argues that rather than a relationship in which the man is more important and the woman feels smaller and attached or dependent, a relationship that values a woman and allows a woman to have a full sense of self and independence should be the standard. In this way, a woman would enter into a relationship out of choice with both parties embodying full senses of self and equal importance.

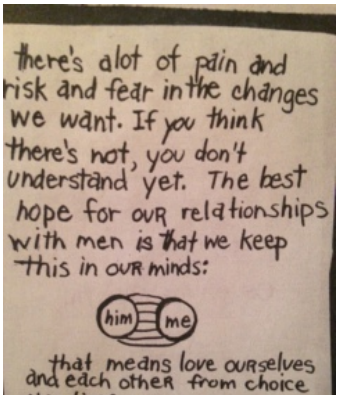

Figure 4. Self in Relationships

As a result of consciousness-raising and the self-persuasion that occurred there, The Boston Women's Health Collective argues, "We began to see our relationships with ourselves, men, other women, and the social institutions in this country in a new way" (7). The stronger sense of self and independence afforded women the choice to enter into relationships and to "feel positive about our needs to be dependent and connect with others" (11).

Consciousness-raising groups were attempts to stop letting voices other than women's speak authoritatively about the meaning of their experience. I argue it is the collection of personal narratives in a space of trust that allows women to begin to trust themselves, to persuade themselves of their own sense of self-worth in order to speak about other topics. The first step of self-love, according to hooks, is overcoming low self-esteem, and important parts of self-esteem include "the practice of living consciously, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness, living purposefully and the practice of personal integrity" (*All* 55). Living consciously means we think critically about ourselves and the world we live in: "To live consciously means to seek to be aware. . . . to engage in critical reflection about the world we live in and know most intimately" (*All* 55-56) In her text, *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks discusses the students who come from silence to articulation as a coming to voice, which is more than "the act of telling one's experience." Instead, "it is using that telling strategically—to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects" (148). Telling one's experience is also persuasion that the self can speak, and this is evident by the writers that emerged from second-wave feminism.

In addition, this new sense of self produced a strong sense of voice in individual writers. Feminists demonstrate that consciousness-raising in persuading the self allowed women to then take up voice in political and social arenas. A text that argues it was produced from the seeds of consciousness-raising claims that consciousness-raising groups motivated ordinary women to write:

> Most of the following articles were not written by professional writers, though some of these women have since gone on to publish articles and to write books. . . . Their research and insights have created a body of knowledge where none existed. And politically they have helped raise the issue of rape to new levels of analysis. (NYRF 62)

As women recognized that they had an audience and as they achieved a sense of being able to trust themselves, they began seriously developing knowledge in written form from their subject position as women:

> Women have begun to write for and about themselves, to struggle with new and sometimes painful images of what it is to be a woman in this society. While the movement has attracted many writers, it has also encouraged women to write by creating a forum of ideas and a supportive critical audience. Editorial elitism is discouraged. This open-access to publication is a recognition of the validity of our life experiences, whether we are housewives, welfare recipients, secretaries, prison inmates, factory workers, nurses or caseworkers—and it is reflected not only in grassroots newsletters but also in commercial publications such as *Ms.* Indeed, much of the women's movement's spirit and scope has come from individual women who for the first time in their lives are given the opportunity and encouragement to put their thoughts and feelings down on paper. (NYRF 62)

Other authors of texts describe how consciousness-raising was the site that allowed them to write. For example, Pamela Allen, a member of a California consciousness-raising group and author of a short handbook on consciousness-raising, declares that consciousness-raising "has given me the courage and strength to write this handbook" (7). While this chapter has focused on the ways that consciousness-raising groups provided the site for women to develop literacy practices enabling social and cultural critique, alternative understandings of the self, and an incentive to voice this knowledge, chapter 3 demonstrates how the consciousness-raising groups moved from the literacy

practices of self-persuasion to the literacy practices of social persuasion through writing and activism.

CHAPTER IV

LITERATE ACTION

Consciousness-raising groups were important in and of themselves, a space where women gave voice to their own experiences and developed new critical ideologies. Just as importantly, consciousness-raising groups were the catalysts for political action and protest, public and social actions that feminists took on in legislative, medical, and educational realms. Kathy Sarachild's outline of how to hold a consciousness-raising meeting of one's own, an outline republished in numerous feminist texts, states that "consciousness-raising actions" arise from consciousness-raising groups. That is, consciousness-raising moved beyond the small group into decisive social action in an attempt to achieve material change in women's everyday lives. New York Radical Feminists believed "consciousness-raising prepares women for participation in the women's movement" (28). And, as Pamela Allen, a member of a California consciousness-raising group, argues in her booklet on the small group titled *Free Space*, "The women's movement's first commitment is to changing the social condition which makes being female so oppressive. It is only by changing objective reality that all women will ever have the chance to be free" (44). These feminist philosophies on consciousness-raising and action align with a central piece of Freire's theory of literacy that argues that literacy allows participants to recognize material and historical conditions that affect their lives; this recognition enables individuals to take action in the world to make changes in

their communities. Consciousness-raising groups provided the space and support to embolden women to take action.

This chapter illustrates how consciousness-raising was both a starting point for feminist action and was a returning point where women could reflect on and critique their action for rhetorical improvements. As such, consciousness-raising groups extended this bi-directional movement by using action in the community to improve the objective reality of all women. While including multiple primary sources, I focus my examination on *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women* published by the New York Radical Feminists in 1974 for several reasons: 1) the contents and organization of the text make an argument for how consciousness-raising is a part of literate action; 2) the writing and publishing of the book itself is a kind of literate action; and 3) this book was meant both to provide information on rape and to be an overall structural guide for women's movement organizing. In other words, it is an exemplary text of many other feminist texts that connect their action to consciousness-raising groups, and it demonstrates how one feminist issue brought up in consciousness-raising groups explodes into a multi-front feminist action.

The sourcebook on rape, like other feminist texts produced at this time, highlights not only how producing a book is part of feminist action, but also that feminist action is linked to consciousness-raising. As Robin Morgan claims in the introduction of the 1970 anthology of feminist writing *Sisterhood is Powerful*, "This book is action. It was conceived, written, edited, copy-edited, proofread, designed, and illustrated by women" (xiii). Books like Morgan's and the New York Radical Feminist's sourcebook on rape

link their writing and production to consciousness-raising groups. While the rape sourcebook begins with a transcript of consciousness-raising meeting, the introduction of the anthology insists the best politics are formed out of consciousness-raising groups, and these politics come full circle: included in the book is a guide explaining how to have a consciousness-raising group of one's own. Other texts produced by feminist collectives similarly begin with an acknowledgement of how consciousness-raising groups were the germination of ideas to produce published texts and take other kinds of action. For instance, well-known Boston Women's Health Collective's publication of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* explains in the introduction that it all began with a "small discussion group on 'women and their bodies'" (1). Feminists regularly link their publications and social and political actions to the consciousness-raising group.[15]

New York Radical Feminists' *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women* both begins and ends with consciousness-raising. After a short manifesto and introduction, the text starts with a transcript of a consciousness-raising meeting on the topic of rape. After the transcript, the book provides other transcripts of a public speak out and a videotaped speak out.[16] The speak outs are followed by a selection of papers written by women and delivered at the conference the New York Radical Feminists held in 1971 on rape, and the next section of the book explains the legal aspects of rape laws and court cases and how feminists worked to repeal a corroboration law. The book ends with a section called "Feminist Action" in which the authors explain the sort of literate action they took on the

[15] The infamous 1968 Miss America Protest that began the image of feminists as bra-burners is linked to consciousness-raising.

[16] Speak outs were publicly held events where women gave testimony to their own experiences. "While a speak-out is a means of discovering an issue that affects women's lives, a conference should begin to explain *how* and *why* the issue affects our lives." These are "a political act" (original emphasis 62).

issue of women's health and safety concerns.[17] These feminist actions include lobbying to repeal a state law on corroboration during rape trials, establishing rape crisis centers, investigating emergency room policies, and developing women's physical education programs. The conclusion of the book returns again to the topic of consciousness-raising reminding the reader that the very foundation of feminist political action is consciousness-raising. They write, "the initial step in the feminist process is consciousness-raising and the final step is political action" (249). This claim is tempered with the idea that this is not a linear process, but a recursive one. They argue the organization of their books was the best way to explain their experience. However, "There are different stages of awareness and action, but they do not necessarily follow one another as we have outlined them here. Consciousness-raising is a political act, and in turn, political action becomes consciousness-raising" (249).

Many feminists saw the writing and distributing of texts as important parts of feminist action. The publication of texts was understood as something different than, but complementary to, consciousness-raising in which published texts solidified feminist viewpoints and provided a space for national dialogue among diverse feminist groups. While the act of writing was often included in consciousness-raising groups, and the production of texts came out of consciousness-raising groups, I understand the emphasis on writing in consciousness-raising groups and writing for publication as a difference between informal and formal writing. For instance, the New York Radical Feminists wrote that literacy practices, and in particular writing, move beyond description of

[17] The full title is "Feminist Action: Women Must Begin Taking Responsibility at Times for the Survival and Well-Being of Other Women"

oppression to an analysis. However, as I indicated in chapter 1, part of consciousness-raising did include verbal analysis of experiences of oppression. The New York Radical Feminists clearly articulate this difference: "The process of writing is unlike that of consciousness-raising because it goes beyond the formulation of a feminist point of view—our attitudes and ideas are tested and verified, not merely expressed" (60). An emphasis on the production of knowledge as "tested and verified" points to the fact that this is another stage in knowledge production that begins in and returns to consciousness-raising groups. Moreover, from a rhetorical perspective, writing for public audiences, ones that include antagonistic readers, is different from the safe space of consciousness-raising in which women practiced self-persuasion. In order to engage in political dialogue with women beyond the consciousness-raising groups, feminist writings operated as a "means of clarifying, analyzing, and expanding issues that have emerged from the process of consciousness-raising and speaking out" (61). Writing was valuable and necessary because it completed the work that Benedict Anderson argues creates an "imagined community." Since writing could be "distributed nationally" and "[did] not entail vast economic resources," (as opposed to conference organization), feminists insisted "[b]ooks, pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers can help to create a national network that will cut across the divisions among women" (NYRF 61-62). Much of this writing focused on the small group and the practices to develop one's own consciousness-raising group, yet another large swath of published texts created bodies of knowledge from a feminist perspective on a wide range of topics. By focusing on the New York Radical Feminists (NYRF), this chapter begins by examining how the

consciousness-raising group moved from self-persuasion in its understanding of rape to social persuasion through its rape sourcebook and its lobbying campaign.

Moving From Consciousness-Raising Groups to Social Action

The NYRF begin their book with a brief introduction focused on consciousness-raising and the topic of rape. They note, "we begin our book on rape where most feminist activity begins—with consciousness-raising" (3). They explain that their consciousness-raising allowed them to see patterns such as sexual assault in some form or another as a common experience for women and that women often internalized this experience as something that they did wrong so this internalization made it difficult to face or deal with this issue. The rest of the introduction provides instruction on how to organize a consciousness-raising group in one's own community and advice on communication practices to use to facilitate a consciousness-raising group. Ending with a list of suggested topics that one might use as the directive content for a consciousness-raising session, the next section of the book is a transcript of a consciousness-raising meeting held on the topic of rape.[18] A group of nine women—Helen, Rita, Marge, Leslie, Gladys, Connie, Sue, Pam, Diana—begin with the question: "Would you report a rape?" (9). Helen acts as the group leader beginning the session with a question and finishing the session with a statement about the tentative knowledge produced from their conversation. The first participant to respond to the topic is Rita. She states she would not report a rape:

[18] This transcript is recorded from the NYRF Rape Conference Workshop on Psychology of the Rapist, His Victims and Rape Fantasies. The workshop was held at a Rape Speakout organized by New York Radical Feminists in January 1971. The speak out is a part of the larger consciousness-raising actions that came from private small group c-r meetings. At some conferences they would hold c-r meetings on certain topics. This is found in the book Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women that was published in 1974 after the Rape Speakout. The text includes considerable information about how to hold your own c-r meetings in your home.

"If there's one conviction in a thousand, why go through all that torment and go through whatever personal things would be involved? Like having your name on the docket."[19] Marge agrees, arguing the laws need to be changed before most women report rape, and Leslie follows up with thinking about how women internalize the crime against them as if they are somehow guilty for being attacked in the first place. Diana adds, "I say the mentality of the police department and the doctors should be investigated" (10), and Helen agrees that "women have been taught to turn their responses inward" (14). What follows is a deluge of women sharing their personal experiences as either a survivor of rape or multiple rapes or as the friend or family member of a survivor of rape. The dialogue is made up of critiques of the ways institutions—medicinal, legal, and educational—shape and contribute to the problem of rape. Notably, each of these institutions is discussed in more detail later in the book: "Legal Aspects," "Rape Crisis Centers," "Medical Issues," and "Self-Defense." The arrangement of the book demonstrates how feminists took action based on patterns that emerged from consciousness-raising groups.

As I demonstrated in chapter 2, self-persuasion occurs during consciousness-raising and motivates women to work toward public persuasion. One pattern the participants identify is that women are taught to internalize blame for an assault. They highlight how part of the reason for this internalization is that they are often not believed by police officers and corroboration laws make prosecution nearly impossible. One

[19] Later in the consciousness-raising session Rita reveals she was the victim of an attack, and she did not go to the police with charges. However, her Puerto Rican community exacted its own form of community justice on her assailant.

woman explains how her cousin's boyfriend, a police officer, told her "there's no such thing [as rape] and that a woman is asking for it subconsciously" (9-10). This is the second pattern that they identify. Dominant discourses deny the existence of the act of violence through articulating and speaking for women's desire. Simultaneously, discourses that situate rape as a real act paint women survivors as having lost their "purity," which makes them undesirable to heterosexual men. Both dominant discourses function to silence survivors. Rita asserts, "There is no way in which we can face the problem, and I have to say to myself that I wasn't demeaned or diminished by this situation" (19). Rita's response shows the difficulty of navigating discourses about the act of violence. On the one hand she says women cannot face the problem because she understands that public discourses deny the existence of rape as a problem. On the other hand, she uses self-talk to reject the idea that she is permanently damaged by the experience. Diana supports and affirms this self-talk: "women should not think of themselves as damaged goods" (23).

When Marge discusses her experience of being rescued by a police officer when a man attacked her on the street, she insists that women should go to the police and press charges no matter the scenario to at least remove some assailants from the streets, but Pam challenges her: "Well, you have to be believed" (15). Pam, like Rita, demonstrates that the dominant discourses make rape a problem that is difficult to face or even articulate because often when women go to get legal justice, they are not believed. This would certainly and seriously contribute to a questioning of the self. Public dominant discourses argue it is a woman's desire or fault: Women are not believed when they seek

legal recourse, and women are seen as a kind of untouchable by other men if they reveal that they have been attacked. Pam notes that these discourses that encourage silence and blame women make it difficult for her to speak on this topic even to her friends. Pam reveals, "I was ashamed to tell my friends. They knew I had been assaulted, but I was unable to say the assault was successful." She continues with statements like, "I couldn't bring myself to say," and "It was too terrible to say" (23). Notably, in this space Pam is telling her narrative, and here she not only is able to articulate what was too terrible to tell to other intimate people in her life, but she is also able to persuade herself that this experience is not something she should be ashamed of. In contrast to her expression of being unable to tell her friends, her voicing in the consciousness-raising session is a kind of self-persuasion: it is alright for her to tell this version of her story and it is alright for her to not take blame for the event.

When Pam articulates her personal experience, the ways institutions shape and contribute to this issue become apparent.

> When I went to the hospital after being raped, two nurses came in; both of them bullied me, two female nurses, because there had been a barroom brawl in my approximate neighborhood at the same time. A man was knocked down and his head had been beat up; he was knocked out; he was brought into emergency at the same time I was, and the nurses were very upset with me because I was hysterical and taking their attention away from this man *who really needed help*. Some cops came to get me after I called them, because I was waiting for my boyfriend to come back; he was out walking my watchdog and it happened in those fifteen minutes. The cop didn't tell me I needed medical attention and a medical examination to determine legal rape, and so they very carefully let my boyfriend go down to the police stations with me, but when I was breaking up while they interviewed me, every time he came over and put his hand on my shoulder or told me to cool it, they threatened to throw him out because he was interfering with their interview. And finally after I had been down there for about five hours, somebody said but how do you know that you've been raped? I was there, that's

> how. They said I had to go to the hospital, and by that time it was maybe six hours afterward! I had to go the hospital, for a medical examination to provide it, and when I went back three weeks later I had to have shots for syphilis and they had lost all my records. Roosevelt Hospital. It's a very bad place for rape; don't go to Roosevelt Hospital. They had no record I had ever been there except my bill. (*Rape Sourcebook* 11)

Pam describes her experience with rape, and, while some women spend more time discussing the details of the event, Pam details the reactions to her attempt to get medical and legal assistance for the incident. She verbalizes her experience, even in the face of being questioned if it actually occurred. Like earlier conversations in the consciousness-raising transcript, Pam could have followed the dominant narrative that women should internalize attacks and that they are somehow at fault for these affronts to their dignity and person. This, after all, seems to be the dominant narrative in relation to powerful institutions that back this up in terms of medical and legal institutions. The nurses are frustrated that Pam is taking their attention away from someone who is "really" hurt, and the police ask her how does she really know she was hurt? Moreover, articulation of experience in the face of "master narratives" that are supported by powerful institutions is an important act of meaning making, an act that rejects alienation, and an act of agency that allows the namer to make sense from her perspective. It is a refusal of the internalized social narratives, a self-persuasion that the self is not guilty for the attack.

In other words, Pam reads the world, she takes events in her life, as other woman have, and puts together meaning. Even though medical and legal discourses dismiss her experience, her reading is that she was attacked. Her experience exists. While articulating the experience she and other woman have had, the group identifies the gendered problem

that a common crime against women is not taken seriously by medical professionals or police officers. That is, they do not see rape as a real or relevant issue in medical and legal discourses. Through consciousness-raising Pam becomes an expert in her situation, one that on multiple levels does not value women for a sexuality that is their own. She names and defines the issue and remakes it not to be an issue of the individual but one of situation. Through this critical literacy practice, she can now begin to consider how to act in ways that will help her make positive change for her life. She moves beyond her individual story and begins to recognize the implications for women as a collective, for the injustice they experience in this process. While Pam has a safe space to name her experience without questioning herself or her validity, the rest of the group continues together to redefine, or rename, the crime of rape and its meaning.

After multiple other personal experiences have been shared the women begin identifying the problems and thinking through new meaning:

> Gladys: I think women have to stop looking at it as a sexual thing, because then they get messed up. (19)
>
> Rita: It has to be suggested that rape doesn't have to be violent; it's not necessarily the violence that's the most harmful aspect. If your sexual will, your sexual dignity is imposed on, why is that so much less terrible to you than if you are beaten by some violent and brutal person? You are assigning away your dignity, which women have too frequently sacrificed. (20)
>
> Leslie: I don't think conditions necessarily have to be violence; I think that you can be just as outraged by. . .
>
> Diana: . . . the threat of violence.
>
> Helen: I would like to make the point here that rape is violence but it's not necessarily physical violence.

> Rita: Maybe the term 'violation'. . .
>
> Connie: It can simply be sexual exploitation and aggression, not necessarily violence.
>
> Helen: I think some people here are saying that rape is violence that takes a sexual form.
>
> Pam: Hostility, perhaps.
>
> Gladys: Sexual hostility. . . Therefore one should not be any more ashamed than you would be in reporting that you were beaten and stabbed. Rape is sexual, but I think the violence aspect, the threat of violence or the overpowering psychology of the victim has a whole lot more to do with it than true sexuality.

The women point out what general cultural meanings are about rape: women all have rape fantasies; women are to blame for attacks; women internalize these discourses and do blame themselves thus remaining silent; police officers are not particularly helpful in recording the events and often question the victim; hospitals do not take this violation as seriously as other types of injury. In contrast to these readings of the act of rape, the women collaboratively compose their own understanding of this event.

They tentatively decide to move rape outside of the realm of the sexual act and think more in terms of power. They question the definition of violence and analyze what it means to feel threatened or have one's will imposed upon. Moreover, they redefine rape and violence, emphasizing the lack of a woman's choice instead of the amount of force used in the act. Instead of thinking of rape as violent sex, they rethink rape as a power dynamic that manifests in a sexual form, using other vocabulary terms to explain it, such as hostility. So they read the events of their lives and the discourses they are

surrounded by and have materially experienced to identity problems and begin to think through them.

In consciousness-raising groups such as this dialogue on rape, women take an experience that is familiar and rearticulate it collectively from the position of women. Self-persuasion in this case involves being able to articulate and describe a personal experience—I can speak and reason, thus I can to move internalized self-blame to externalized critique of institutions—I can tell a different version of this story. The women's collective redefinition of rape not as sex, but an act of violence and removal of choice demonstrates how women took personal experience and used self-persuasion to then focus on the material world. They took discourses that encouraged their silence and complicity and turned them out toward institutions.

Writing Bodies of Knowledge

Freire insists that "critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever stage of their struggle for liberation," and an important part of this dialogue is recognizing historical conditions that have led to the present time (65). The authors of the rape sourcebook reiterate the consciousness-raising session that is printed at the beginning of the book and the discovery women made about a need for action: "The women in the preceding consciousness-raising discussion on rape cry out for action" (28). The authors preface the action revealed in the rest of the book with the history of women's inability to speak out and take action without severe punishment. They situate historical women in the context of the establishment of the nation highlighting the contradictory nature of many laws. One of

the historical figures they point to is Anne Hutchinson. They write that Hutchinson "was imprisoned, excommunicated, and exiled from the colony of Massachusetts for making the 'unprecedented demand that she, a woman, be permitted to think for herself about God and provoke others, women included, into doing the same'" (3). In their acknowledgment of historical conditions, the NYRF do not point to the topic of rape but show how topics less mired in discourses of sex, crime, and punishment, were still topics that women were severely punished for speaking publicly on. Similarly, they show how historical women trying to make social and political change were not lauded for their bravery but were chastised for breaking the rules, speaking on topics that were not women's to speak on. For instance, they point to the Grimké sisters abolitionist speeches of the 1830's. In response to the sisters' public protest, the NYRF point out that the Council of Congregationalist Ministers of Massachusetts formulated a Pastoral Letter that admonished women for speaking and taking action:

> We appreciate the unostentatious prayers of women in advancing the cause of religion at home and abroad; in Sabbath-schools; in leading religious inquirers to the pastors for instruction; and in all such associated efforts as become the modesty of her sex. . . But when she assumes the pace and tone of man as a public reformer. . .she yields the power which God has given her for her protection, and her character becomes unnatural. (qtd. in NYRF 3)

Suggesting a tradition of women's political and social activism that addresses the ways women have been silenced for both wanting to think for themselves and encouraging others to do so, the authors associate this lineage with the women who participated in consciousness-raising groups, wrote for the book, and participated in other literate activities.

The NYRF use these historical conditions to demonstrate the importance of consciousness-raising as a "vital precondition" to public speech because it provides women with emotional and intellectual support before they engage with antagonistic audiences, a space where punishment, whether legal or social, was a very real potential consequence (29). The discussion of the ways that women have been historically silenced and punished severely for speaking out serves to demonstrate the rhetorical barriers that women operate from even as they write, publish, and protest to make space for their own perspectives and to take action to make better lives for women in their communities and across the nation.

The next section of the book is a collection of papers written by ordinary women and given at a conference on the topic of rape. In exploring the topic of rape and making sense of it, one of the papers presented in *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women* demonstrates how little information there was out there about the topic of rape as a crime against women and how even fewer texts discussed the topic of rape from the perspective of women. An essay, entitled "Rape Bibliography" by Joan Mathews is a bibliography or a collection of texts that speak to or show the gap in knowledge and the general absence of interest in the subject (113). Mathews's paper outlines her personal experience researching the topic for a college term paper and the process of learning how little access and explanation is available. Mathews describes her trip to the main branch of the Brooklyn Public Library where she finds little information is available regarding the topic of rape, particularly as a "crime against women." She discovers over ninety nonfiction books discussing murder, and she finds books on the rape of art, Africa, Lock, and

Lucretia, but she does not find mention of rape as a crime against women in those same sections, or in others like anthropology. Mathews then travels to a bookstore, finds nothing, so tries the reference room in another library. Finally, she locates twenty books on the rape of women, but most of them are "accounts of trials of rapists." Only one of those twenty books could be considered "a serious study of the general problem of rape," yet it was published in 1935, thirty-five years before. Mathews narrates her ongoing search, visiting five other libraries and bookstores; she uncovers texts on treating offenders, Christian virgins during the Roman Empire, religious myths and symbols, one on urban crime in which rape is briefly mentioned, and another that blames victims for their attacks. After this exhaustive search she returns to the main library she began at in an attempt to retrace her steps, and she realizes that the subject 'Rape' did not even appear in the catalogue. She recounts her dismay: "I was advised to consult *Books in Print*, an exhaustive list of books available anywhere, not just those in the library system. There is no such category as 'Rape.' Under 'Sex Crimes' there are ten books, none of those titles mention rape or sexual assault on women" (NYRF 115).

Reflecting on this experience, Mathews offer a list of books she thinks might provide a different perspective on the topic while noting the clear gap in knowledge about the topic. Her conclusion is that the absence occurred in part because it is beneficial to men: "all of them benefit from the existence of rape… by minimizing its importance, blaming women for it, or even denying that there is such a thing, men permit rape to continue" (NYRF 116). Mathews concludes that women need to produce their own definition and body of knowledge on the subject. Without new work by women, rape will

continue to be understudied and too easily dismissed as a serious crime, despite its pervasiveness and the serious psychological and physical trauma women experience as a result of it. Critiques like Mathews' and others at the conference helped lead to an overall list of goals for taking more action, which included work in legal areas, psychology, education, and politics, as well as procedures to help rape victims and their living conditions—all topics mentioned in the initial consciousness-raising transcript (267).

Including these various essays from the conference in the publication sourcebook makes an argument for women reading this sourcebook to begin to produce their own writing or at least to start thinking on their own. Moreover, subsequent sections of the sourcebook reveal how collectives then developed their initial discussions in consciousness-raising sessions into thoroughly investigated papers and finally into political action by engaging with institutions to make change and by making their body of knowledge more public through these changes.

Taking Legal Action

In addition to writing for dissemination to public audiences, another action that the authors argue grew out of consciousness-raising is a successful lobbying campaign to repeal the corroboration requirements in rape laws in the state of New York.[20] In rape cases in New York at this time a law on corroboration required that the testimony of the victim had to be validated by other forms of further evidence. Corroboration was needed

[20] This law was present in 14 other states at the time, and written into penal code in Iowa. And they cite an article by Richard Hibey, "The Trial of a Rape Case: An Advocate's Analysis of Corroboration, Consent, and Character" in which he lists 21 states that corroboration is not a law, but is still found in practice: 'the fact remains that proof of rape in most cases is sufficient only when the evidence is corroborated' (quoted in 127). Moreover, the authors say that it is argued that corroboration is needed for rape cases because of the gravity of the crime, but they note that the same corroboration is not needed for other grave crimes such as murder.

for the victim's identification of the assailant, for the victim's claim that penetration occurred, and for the victim's claim that she did not consent. While physical bruises were counted as corroborative evidence, raped women who were threatened with weapons or drugged had little recourse because they did not have physical bruises. The District of Columbia Task Force on Rape concluded, "any woman worthy of the protection of the law would defend her virtue by at least undergoing a significant degree of physical harm before 'giving in'" (qtd. in NYRF 126). Thus, the corroboration laws inherently ruled out various types of sexual violence.

Feminists pointed out that the corroboration laws and other cultural attitudes put the witness's credibility on trial because of her femaleness. The NYRF highlight that "the assumption is that women, given their nature will make numerous false accusations of rape—and so corroboration is a means of preventing women from doing so" (127). These assumptions in the corroboration laws about the nature of femaleness meant that a woman's testimony alone is not sufficient means to get a conviction. More specifically, the central object of inquiry during the trial became "the nature of the victim" and the "victim's testimony" rather than the crime itself (126). The corroboration laws were evidence of this larger legal and cultural understanding about women's capacity to be veracious. Some "experts" at the time argued women who sought justice in the legal system for the crime of rape should be mentally examined before her claims were taken seriously. In an authoritative law book, *Rules of Evidence*, a Professor Wigmore argues, 'No judge should ever let a sex-offense charge go to the jury unless the female complainant's social history and mental makeup have been examined and testified to by a

qualified physician' (qtd. in NYRF 127). Similarly, the American Bar Association Committee on the Improvement of the Law of Evidence reported,

> 'Today it is *unanimously* held (and we say 'unanimously' advisedly) by experienced psychiatrists that the complainant woman in a sex offense should always be examined by competent experts to ascertain whether she suffers from some mental or moral delusion or tendency, frequently found especially in young girls, causing distortion of the imagination in sex cases.' (qtd. in NYRF 127)

Corroboration laws were mentioned in the transcript on consciousness-raising as part of the reason several of the women in the group said they would not report a rape to the police or seek legal recourse. Feminists' decision to lobby to change corroboration laws are an attempt to make legal recourse more accessible and to revise cultural and social notions that women were inherently mendacious.

Victims of these crimes and feminists attempting to make changes were up against a mountain of legal restrictions and cultural attitudes about women's virtue and sexuality. In addition to corroboration laws, other issues and assumptions about women and men skewed women's ability to receive a fair trial. Under the law wives could not be raped by husbands, even when the couple was separated.[21] If a woman had any romantic relationship with a man, then asked for help after a rape, jurors and judges thought it was highly doubtful that she was attacked. Feminists argued that:

> The unstated assumption of the courts is that if a woman has ever voluntarily had intercourse with the rapist, then by definition she could not have been raped. The lack of distinction between voluntary and involuntary sex in these cases only reveals a male supremacist attitude that all women should be sexually available to

[21] Johns were rarely prosecuted for the rape of prostitutes. There was an assumption that prostitutes could not be raped because of their line of work.

> men, whether the men are husbands or boyfriends. The courts view rape as a crime only if it is committed by a male who does not 'own' the woman. (129)[22]

Experts at the time asserted that in cases when the victim knew the assailant it was difficult to register consent, because it was "'customary' for a woman to say 'no' when she means 'yes'" (145). They argued that a "general reputation for unchastity" had a direct bearing on a woman's credibility in these trials, and prior sexual acts could be read as prior bad acts for women.[23] Cultural assumptions at that time viewed with suspicion and distrust women hitchhiking, sleeping in the nude, wearing revealing clothing, working as a cocktail waitress, having alcoholic beverages, or inviting a man into their homes. Some experts claimed that "the victim actually sets up the rape either consciously or unconsciously" (145), thus making the victim partly responsible for the crime and relieving the assailant.

Beyond making a witness's credibility the object of inquiry in cases that actually made it to court, the corroboration laws were understood to be contributing to the reason that cases were not prosecuted in the first place. The conviction rate was considerably lower in states that did have the corroboration laws.[24] When feminists in New York decided to act on this particular issue, their goal was not more punitive laws; they simply "want courts to recognize the rights of women to a fair and equitable trial," and they

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[22] In one of the speak out transcripts a woman describes how she was attacked many times by boys in her neighborhood. The neighborhood boys stopped once she had a boyfriend.

[23] A feminist response to this claim: "The assumption that if the rape victim is unchaste she could not possibly be telling the truth is founded on the medieval logical that anyone who cannot walk across a bed of coals must indeed be a heretic" (129).

[24] "In New York City in 1971, when the state law required corroboration of penetration, identification, and lack of consent, the conviction rate for rape was three tenths of one percent. In 1972 the New York State Legislature passed a new rape law which required corroboration only for lack of consent, and by 1973 the conviction rate was 3 percent" (128).

alleged that the current laws "reflect only suspicion and mistrust of the victim" (NYRF 125).[25] Feminists took action and are credited with the push for legal change: "In New York State feminist groups launched a highly successful lobbying campaign to repeal all corroboration requirements in the rape laws. Within a period of three years legislators who had been strong advocates of corroboration became advocates of its repeal" (130). The corroboration laws were repealed and a new law went into effective July 1, 1972 removing corroboration for identification and penetration, but keeping it for consent. The women's movement was also credited with encouraging more women to report. An interview with a self-identified feminist lawyer, partner in a New York law firm, remarks that it was not the new law that would encourage women, because the new law still left very broad level of discretion to the courts. However, Wilson, the feminist lawyer, believes, "I think what has encouraged them [women to report]—and in fact, has encouraged this new law—is that the women's movement has been discussing it. . . .the New York Radical Feminist Rape Conference has played a vital role in raising the issue and its political significance" (141). Mentioning other legal groups considering working on new laws for protecting women in these situations, Wilson posits, "I think all of these movements and actions stem from the original interest of feminist groups" (142). In the sourcebook, the NYRF show both how the initial consciousness-raising work led to further investigation and women's knowledge production and how this led to change within the public sphere.

[25] In an interview with a feminist lawyer, the lawyer notes the legal system in these situations "do not trust women;" "the assumption is that women lie" (141).

While feminist action is credited with achieving this legal repeal, encouraging more women to pursue criminal charges, and persuading other legal groups to take action, feminist activists did not stop at the repeal of the corroboration laws and insisted that its repeal must go hand in hand with other actions. They acknowledge that even with the repeal, corroboration still may be a key factor in securing conviction. In discussing their decision to go for the repeal rather than the reformulation of rape laws altogether, they admit this does not mean women will get a fair trial. In the sourcebook, they include a reformulated model law that would reclassify the crime written by the New York University Law School Clinical Program in Women's Legal Rights and highlight what the benefits of this new law would be, implicitly encouraging readers to consider taking action (NYRF 130). The text reveals considerable rhetorical knowledge and foresight in terms of effects of political choices and attempts at making and achieving change. This demonstrates feminist success, and it shows the continued need for organizing, writing, and activism. It invites and encourages other women reading this text to participate in consciousness-raising groups and/or begin their own organizing based on their consciousness-raising sessions.

Feminists show that change needed to occur on multiple fronts, which they did take up in the form of educating the community, starting rape crisis centers, developing physical education programs for women, and investigating emergency room policies. The ultimate end goal was to change the way that gender was understood and to end rape and other forms of sexual abuse and exploitation: "No one reform will succeed if women continue to be viewed as objects or possessions, which is why we must continue to fight

on every front" (NYRF 176). They hoped that with continued speaking out and education that "societal attitudes toward the rape victim—and all women—change. However equitable rape laws become, if the sexual conduct of a woman remains the basis upon which her character and her credibility are determined, then essentially no change in the status of women either in court or in the larger society will have occurred" (132).

Navigations into taking action in the legal system proved difficult not only because women's capacity to be veracious was questioned, but also because of the historical public lynching of African American men on trumped-up charges of raping white women, a tool of racial oppression. Furthermore, the rape of black women was "tolerated and condoned by the legal system" (131). Citing historical evidence of the unfair treatment of black rape victims, the authors note how Billie Holiday was sentenced to a youth institution, while the man who attacked her was sentenced to five years in prison. The NYRF speculate, "surely, had she been a white child, he would have been executed. Even now, black women are not encouraged to report rape, because they know that their accusations will be met with suspicion and sometimes hostility" (NYRF 131). Essie Green Williams, a member of the National Black Feminist Organization, demonstrates the difficulty of black feminists navigating these concerns and civil rights agendas, "one of the concerns of many black men when we're lobbying for the change in the rape law was that accusations of rape was one of the ways of hanging black men" (246). At the first National Black Feminist Organization Conference, Williams held a workshop on rape and the role of black feminists navigating a racist and sexist society. She confirms that the attitude of the community, like the police, is "that when a woman is

raped she must have done something wrong. . . . black women rarely get the kind of response that they need when they've been raped" (242). Williams points out that most rapes are not interracial, but intra-racial, and this is a serious task for both black and white feminists to navigate as dominant discourses stereotype black men as violent rapists of white women.

The repeal of corroboration laws, the education of communities that helped the repeal and encouraged others to work on different laws, and the rate of women reporting crimes are all explicitly linked to the initial work of consciousness-raising. The authors of the rape sourcebook specifically point to the transcript of the consciousness-raising session in the beginning of the book.

> As Rita stated in the consciousness-raising session. . .'The authoritarian society is our enemy. It's what oppresses us, and I think it's the authoritarian society that's distorted sexuality to this extent, making it an instrument of power. If we begin to adopt the same flaw in treating rape in punitive terms, then we can only deal with it symptomatically as it turns up, bit by bit; there will still be new rapists, because rape is the psychology of sex in our society.' (NYRF 125)

In the text that serves not only to inform, but also as a structural guide for do-it-yourself organizing and action, these explicit links to consciousness-raising clearly emphasize the importance of such a practice.

Encouraging Activism

Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women was meant to be an overall structured guide for women's movement organizing. Based on the self-persuasion that occurred in the consciousness-raising groups, that women are not to blame for their own attacks, the text encourages self-authorized investigations into emergency room policies, the

construction of women's only spaces that deal with the problem of rape differently than contemporary legal and medical systems, and the development of physical education programs for women. When Pam describes her experience with a hospital emergency room in the consciousness-raising transcript, she articulates how she was chastised by nurses for being in the way of a man "who really needed help" for his injuries in a bar fight, how she was not informed about the proper procedures she needed to have completed if she were to seek a court case, and how the hospital botched medical records of her attendance and care. The NYRF describe self-authorized investigations into emergency procedures and authorize text readers to begin their own strategic investigations into local emergency room policies. This section of the book on feminist action notes that hospitals have been failing women when they come in for healthcare after rape; the improper care led to the possibility of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, prolongation of emotional trauma, and lack of evidence for the legal system. Moreover, the Manhattan Women's Political Caucus and the New York Women Against Rape performed an investigation of hospital emergency rooms. After dealing with staff resistance, and continually being transferred to different departments and administrators, the self-authorized investigators finally were able to get information from a doctor spokesman for the Medical Center for Human Rights who advised them that American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) Technical Bulletin was available for hospitals but not necessarily followed. Based on the group's own investigation into New York area hospitals and the "disinterested and uncooperative attitudes" of hospital staff, the investigators advocate for other self-authorized group investigations across the nation

by describing their own investigation, offering a list of questions that women's groups should use as a guideline for investigations, providing advice on ways to deal with reticent hospital administrators, and offering a template for making immediate change in local hospital policies. The authors encouraged the do-it-yourself investigating groups to create a task force that included hospitals and other institutions that dealt with rape. Additionally they were told to create a hospital referral list of best hospitals and worst hospitals based on their investigation and to develop list of women as advocates that victims could call for accompaniment to hospital for emotional support.

If the investigating group found that like many hospital emergency rooms in New York, there was little or no uniform policy, the investigating group should obtain and post the ACOG Technical Bulletin in "all hospital emergency rooms, given to hospital and administrators and professional staff, posted in all police stations, and distributed to law enforcement officers" (NYRF 198). However, because the ACOG Bulletin is written in technical language, they suggest that it should be translated in both English and Spanish in plain language directed at women rather than the physicians. The sourcebook provides a copy of the ACOG Bulletin and an example of a translated version of it—an information bulletin written by the Boston Women Against Rape.

The content and language of the ACOG Technical Bulletin and the translation provided by the Boston Women Against Rape reveals significant difference in perspective when it came to the topic of hospital's routine care for rape victims. Given that the ACOG Technical Bulletin was the official text hospitals should follow and was thus the text recommended by self-authorized investigative feminist committees, the

content and style reaffirms the severe lack of procedural care and concern for rape victims in emergency rooms, despite the fact that victim's entrance into the emergency room was a vital time for their health, safety, and ability to pursue a court case. For instance, the ACOG Technical Bulletin is directed at physicians and uses medical jargon difficult for any lay person to understand. Its purpose is "to provide proper procedures for protection of patient and doctor as well as in the interest of justice in cases of alleged or suspected rape or sexual molestation" (203). While filling out medical forms that include examination, laboratory specimens, and photographs, the physician is told "NEVER say or write in the record an opinion concerning whether or not the patient was raped. The phrases 'suspected rape' or 'alleged rape' may be used when necessary" (205). The brochure advises the physicians to view women asking for help after rape with distrust and suspicion. While a discussion of pregnancy prevention is present in the ACOG Technical Bulletin, there is no mention of abortion options should pregnancy occur. The sample translated bulletin by the Boston Women Against Rape is much more centered on informing the woman entering the hospital of procedures and consequences of such procedures including side effects of those procedures, what to expect during the procedures, medical costs, and legal ramifications. The translated version is notably longer and includes recommendations on how women can rhetorically navigate their experience in the emergency room and engage in self-care such as the advice that "a sympathetic physician may prescribe a sedative for short-term use. Don't be afraid to ask for it" (212). Here writing from a woman's perspective expands the language of emergency room policy, and providing other women with thorough accessible

information helps women nationwide enact their own agency and self-care by being able to insist on and understand proper procedure.

In addition to the self-authorized investigations into emergency room policies, various feminist collectives across the nation established literal space to deal with rape differently than the medical and legal institutions. In 1971 feminist groups in Washington, D.C., New York, Detroit, and California established rape crisis centers. Rape crisis centers not only served as a stop-gap measure for the failing legal and medical systems, but they also served as centers for community education. They educated the public, feminists, and even local police and hospitals on best policies and practices for caring for rape victims. Additionally, part of the community education became the development of community literacy practices centered on the topic of rape that were very similar to the process of consciousness-raising groups. Thus, the literacy practices of feminist consciousness-raising groups translated into material action to shape and change the objective reality of women, offering rape victims like Pam, who spoke about her mistreatment by the medical and legal system in the consciousness-raising group, an alternative. This literate action was the actual establishment of a physical space that operated on the new bodies of knowledge created by women on the topic of rape in order to work toward the elimination of rape and to support and bring justice for those who experienced the violence of the crime of rape.

In the sourcebook, feminists argue, "Their very presence [rape crisis centers] is a radical achievement of the women's movement" (180). The authors of the sourcebook describe the establishment of rape crisis centers as the realized abstract projections

stemming from consciousness-raising. In particular, the publication of the book notes that the consciousness-raising, followed by the conference, produced rape crisis centers that serve a real need, again validating the initial understanding in consciousness-raising that rape was a widespread problem stemming from sexist thinking: "Two years later there are rape crisis centers all around the country attacking these problems and sometimes solving them. What we thought might be particular problems of women in large urban cities have turned out to be the same ones that women in suburbs and small towns are facing" (177).

In contrast to socialized passivity of girls and women and in response to violence against women, another literate action that feminists took was to advocate for, to develop, and to practice a physical education program that included strength training, coordination, self-discipline, and self-defense techniques. The authors of the book observe that women "are not given physical fitness courses in schools that train us to use our bodies" (213). Instead women are told to go out with a man at night, and rely on him for protection: the "result is our trained incapacity to defend ourselves and fight back" (213). The authors encourage readers to develop lists of referrals of non-sexist martial arts teachers, to advocate for physical education at all levels, to push for integrated classes taught by men and women, and to call for the development of new martial arts techniques by women for women. The book provides its own brief physical education program for readers in which they explain "street tactics" describing what kind of everyday objects can be used as weapons and how they might be used as weapons. They review legal weapons and the hows, whys, and whens of choosing a weapon. The second

part of physical education in the sourcebook focuses on anatomy. Using images and descriptions the text shows what body parts to strike and how to strike those body parts with the most impact. The third portion of the physical education section is on physical space, both at home and in public. The authors detail doors, locks, and windows in homes and apartments, and they offer education on operating in public spaces like the subway, stairways, elevators, cars, hitchhiking, and hotels and motels.

Returning to the Source

The first sentence of the conclusion of the book brings the reader full circle to consciousness-raising: "the initial step in the feminist process is consciousness-raising" (NYRF 249). The appendix includes an in-depth step-by-step guide of how to hold a consciousness-raising meeting and develop a small group in one's own community, and the text suggests the effects of these first steps are far reaching. The book is now literally in the hands of other ordinary women like themselves who simply need to start by sitting down together, asking some questions, and having a conversation. While this chapter's analysis examines primarily the NYRF's *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women*, its topic, and its influence, the array of other feminist collectives, their personal and social concerns, and their feminists actions are vast. These literacy practices of self-persuasion, social persuasion, and change operate as a counter to the public memory narratives of second-wave feminism, a topic I discuss further in chapter 4.

CHAPTER V

RECITATION AND REMEMBERING CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING GROUPS

In one of our first Women in English (WiE) Discussion Group meetings, we brainstormed possible topics for subsequent meetings. One topic was questioning the value of the use of the term *feminist*. How does it rhetorically help and hinder our epistemic and political goals? There was a general consensus that as women scholars and teachers in the English Department, we identified also as feminist scholars. However, what we believe feminist scholarship entails, what we know of feminist histories, and how we feel about feminist theory and activism are unsettled, less-agreed-upon matters. Undoubtedly, our positions stem from our past experiences with the term. Feminism, like other schools of thought, has its defenders and dissenters and everyone in between: radicals, moderates, conservatives, and so on. However, the very question, how does the term *feminist* help and hinder our epistemic and political goals, reveals its continued vulnerability as an academic field of study and a political standpoint. Without question in English Studies we take up positions as early modernists and linguists, as poets and fiction writers, as literary critics and rhetoricians, and as historians and archivists. I am not doubting the value of questioning a term and exploring its implications, nor am I saying that certain topics should be protected from interrogation. Nevertheless, I am suggesting that the repeated uncertainty and insecurity surrounding the term *feminist*,

both in academia and outside of it, indicate a significant cultural anxiety about the term, even among those of us who identify with it and have benefitted from it.

Arguing for consciousness-raising as a corrective example for public memory, I end this dissertation demonstrating that *how* women are remembered and forgotten matters just as much, if not more, than *who* is remembered and forgotten. This chapter considers the public and academic memory of second-wave feminism and examines the rhetorical strategies used to remember and forget the work of second-wave feminists.[26] Contesting both the prolific image of the bra burner in popular memory, and the progressive academic historical narratives of second-wave feminism that situate the 1970s as essentialist, anachronistic, and racist (Hemmings 44), I maintain that this reexamination of consciousness-raising more effectively depicts of the complexity and power of second-wave feminism and its theory and activism. After defining public memory and exploring the trope of the bra burner, I make a case for consciousness-raising not only as a rhetorical technique for investigating history, but also as a valuable practice for contemporary participation both inside and outside academe.

Public Memory

In downtown Greensboro, North Carolina there is a museum whose highlight is a section of the Woolworth's countertop where four Black college students sat down and began the sit-in movement on February 1, 1960, one that spread throughout the nation as an accessible protest practice. As a huge part of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-to-

[26] Jack and Enoch argue that not only is important to consider which women's achievements are remembered and forgotten, but also what rhetorical strategies facilitate techniques of memory and forgetting. In other words, whatis important is not so much who is forgotten, but *how* they are forgotten.

late twentieth century, sit-ins and images of them are a characteristic representation of that movement and of the organized, collective commitment to non-violent action in an effort to fight for African American rights. The collective non-violent practices of actions like sit-ins and marches function as touchstones in the public memory of civil rights. While these images do depict African American women participating in the struggle, they more extensively represent the accomplishments of the male participants particularly when it comes to pointing out leaders of the movement, leaders whom hardly need mentioning—Martin Luther King Jr. as the most iconic.[27]

Throughout the downtown Greensboro area, numerous statues and signs commemorate the history of the city—references to inventors, businesses, railroads, and wars both revolutionary and civil—all of these represent men and their accomplishments. Where are the signs and statues commemorating the work of women and feminists?[28] Where are the streets, parks, and schools named after well-known women and feminists for their innovative cultural and political work? There are few here and elsewhere. This lack of public memorials commemorating and praising women's achievements is typical of our nation according the research of Courtney Workman: "Only 5 percent of the 2, 200 National Historic Landmarks are dedicated to women. Of these, 'few succeed in showing women as positive role models; instead they often feature women by their relationship to

[27] While the story of Rosa Parks, female civil rights activist, is an important narrative in the civil rights movements, it generally proposes that Parks was an "old" woman whom out of exasperation refused to give up her bus seat—fought the man, so to speak, individually and without strategy or plan. In reality, Parks was an active strategist in civil rights organizing and at 42 years old, was one among many women and men who were arrested for resisting segregation.

[28] I use the terms women and feminists here because I am interested in the achievements of women, and not all women identify as feminists. I also am interested in the achievements of feminists, not all feminists are women, but feminists are pro-woman.

and sometimes subordination to men'"(62) (qtd. in Enoch and Jack 533). The dearth of public memorials dedicated to the accomplishments of women sends a clear message: the accomplishments of women are not worth remembering; they are not an important part of the narrative history and identity of the nation. Implicitly, this sends the message that women's accomplishments are not important for the future either.[29]

It is not only in public memorials that our public imagination forgoes women and feminists. University professors Jessica Enoch and Jordynn Jack remark that university students are both surprised to find out women are historically skilled and accomplished rhetors and frustrated by the fact that they have not learned about the abundance of women rhetors' historical achievements. Enoch and Jack note students frequently ask with irritation and confusion, "'Why haven't we learned about these women before? Why are we just now learning about these women's rhetorical achievements?'" (520).

So too, the work of second-wave feminists is lacking from general public memory. Unlike the Civil Rights Movement example for which many photos and historical descriptions exist, where are the representative images and histories for the work of the Women's Liberation Movement, a movement that spanned from the early 1960s to the late 1970s? What comes to mind, if anything? The images of the past shape the present and what we believe should be included in it. According to journalist Jennifer

[29] One might say that because women have not been allowed in the public sphere in the same ways as men, that this is why there are less public memorials. It is only a matter of time before the historically recognized achievements of women catch up, since women only recently began participating in public endeavors. A statement like that ignores the ways public memorials could signal the private work women have completed. This also ignores the fact that women have been acting in courageous ways in the public for centuries, but have continually been ignored.

Lee, an example from a History-Social Science fourth-grade textbook[30] and the six-page chapter entitled "A Call for Equality" that describes 1960-1975 is indicative of the dearth of representation: "There is a discussion of Martin Luther King, Jr., the Civil Rights Act, and Cesar Chavez. Dolores Huerta, who co-founded the United Farm Workers, is only mentioned *briefly.* There is just *one sentence* about the Women's Liberation Movement: *'Women also spoke out against unequal treatment in the 1960s'*" (Lee n.p.; my emphasis). It is not a leap of logic to suggest that this paucity of information about the Women's Liberation Movement in particular, and women's achievements in general, is representative of most elementary school textbooks, or secondary or collegiate for that matter, or more generally collective memory of women's achievements, one of which is the Women's Liberation Movement.

Public memorials, history textbooks, and student voices are just a few concrete examples of the concept of collective memory and public imagination. I understand collective memory and public imagination to be what Enoch and Jack describe as "popular memory" or as "a vernacular presentation of the past that significantly shapes understandings of the present as well as expectations for the future" (519). Popular memory includes representations from popular culture, including media such as television, movies, radio, websites, magazines, tabloids, board games, and toys (see Zeisler). It comprises what Andi Zeisler argues constitutes "mass consciousness," what she articulates as, "Political events that stand as touchstones of collective experience—the Vietnam War, the impeachment hearings of President Clinton, the horrors of 9/11 and

[30] California Studies (Houghton Mifflin)

Hurricane Katrina—as well as coverage of these events on daytime talk shows, nightly news, and everything in between" (3). Social science scholars like Paul Connerton maintain that popular memory is a practice of studying "those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible" (39). It is the study of how narratives are "conveyed and sustained" (Connerton 3). For me, public memory involves the rhetorical study of a repetition in historical and contemporary narratives, as a means to examine how these repetitions inform our present context.

Scholars agree that history is written in the present with rhetorical purposes in mind, and these rhetorical purposes shape the historical narratives that arise. Narratives are selective and unable to capture the complexity of life. Thus, the way histories are written, their content, starting point, and grammar all have an effect on the present moment. Joan Cocks highlights the political nature of historical representations and their effects on the present. She argues that a culture selects "certain meanings and events for emphasis and celebration; isolating others for the purposes of revilement and stigmatization; neglecting or excluding others; and diluting or converting the rest into non-threatening forms" (28). In other words, public memory and collective imagination are a set of narratives used to convey a particular message to an audience for a purpose: to explain what the culture values, and what—or who—it does not.

Additionally, scholars recently have shown that while recovery work, and the creation of multiple narratives is extremely important to feminist historiography, the way stories are told are just as important. That is, the "grammar" as Clare Hemmings notes, or the "rhetorical work" as described by Jack and Enoch (519), has a lasting impact on how

stories are taken up, who is erased and remembered. While Hemming points out "glosses," "citations," and narrative "affect," as political grammar that matters to feminist historiography, Jack and Enoch argue that strategies of remembering, forgetting and "remembering differently" shape public memory (529).

The public memory of the feminist movement is one that has been historically isolated "for purposes of revilement and stigmatization," (28). Even its popular name, Women's Liberation Movement, carries with it echoes of sexual freedom rather than fair and equal treatment in the workplace and education. For example, the 1968 Miss America Protest in Atlantic City, NJ, often cited as second-wave feminists' first foray into public demonstration and protest, is also the same historical event that garnered the derogatory misnomer of "bra burner" for feminists. Instead of acknowledging feminist protest against gender inequalities, the racist nature of the pageant, consumerist use of women's insecurities, and the military's use of white femininity as a symbol for what men were fighting for in Vietnam (see the New York Radical Women's 10 Point Protest), a local newspaper represented them as burning bras, as frivolous and politically misguided. This news coverage ignored that the feminist protest tactics generally followed the genre of New Left protests occurring throughout the U.S. during this time period. Moreover, this misrepresentation of feminist projects is still prevalent today.

The image of the bra burner continues to be a shorthand narrative technique, a cultural citation, to deny legitimacy and complexity of the second-wave feminist movement in particular, and the feminist movement in general. My work in this chapter traces the narrative placement of the bra burner, a well-known image in the public

imagination, constitutes a strategy of "remembering differently" (Enoch and Jack 529), to help shift the present status quo. This image is repeatedly used as a shorthand way to describe second-wave feminism, but also modern feminism at large. Despite the fact that this derogative shorthand is a myth and has been denoted as such since its inception in 1968, it still remains prevalent in the public imagination. This image is one way that feminist narrative is amended, or the way feminist narratives intersect with other "institutionalizations of gendered meanings" (Hemmings 1). The "bra burner" institutionalizes the image of protesting women as frivolous with misplaced efforts and creates misguided and harmful truths about women's history, their political activism, and the effects of their political efforts.

Following Hemmings's concept of "feminist recitation" as particular repetitions that become glosses, or already agreed upon truths, I maintain that in telling histories of second-wave feminism, writers should begin not from the place of the 1968 Miss America Protest pageant protest—the site of the bra burning myth—and often cited as the first public demonstration of second-wave feminism (see McLeod and others), but from a place of consciousness-raising, the space where women encouraged other women and themselves to take control of their own lives and make their own narratives to live by. Consciousness-raising brought forth articulations of sexist inequality, led to the planning of the 1968 Miss America Protest, and became a foundational, widespread, and accessible practice central to the second-wave feminist movement, one that prioritized women's knowledge production and perspective.

"A Groovy Day at the Boardwalk" and a Freedom Trashcan

In 1968 a group of feminists, the New York Radical Women, staged a protest at the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, NJ. The protesters decided this would be their first form of public protest against the sexism they experienced in their daily lives. Carrying signs depicting first wave feminists like Susan B. Anthony and Sojourner Truth that read "Our Heroines," this group of women designated a garbage can as the "freedom trashcan," and many items representative of the constraints on women were thrown in: fake eyelashes, wigs, girdles, bras, *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy* magazines, curlers, high heels, among other artifacts. They carried signs that made claims such as "I am not somebody's pet, toy, or mascot" (Zeisler 50) and "Miss America Sells It" (McLeod 146).[31] The pinnacle of the protest was the crowning of a sheep to symbolize Miss America, to satirize the way contestants and all women were valued and judged on appearance "'like animals at a county fair'" (qtd. in McLeod 144).[32]

The New York Radical Women had a ten-point manifesto to explain why they were protesting this particular pageant, the main point being to protest the "image of Miss America, an image that oppresses women in every area it purports to represent us" (Morgan 521).[33] These ten points cover specific caveats of sexism, racism, militarism, capitalism, and consumerism (Morgan 522). The first point, *The Degrading Mindless-*

[31] The protest was not perfect, and some woman-blaming posters aimed at Miss America were there: "Miss America Goes Down" and "Miss America Is a Big Falsie" and so on (McLeod 146).
[32] This was a "cue from Yippie's pig-for-president campaign" in Chicago that happened a few weeks earlier.
[33] "Given that Miss America and beauty queens in general have become something of a cultural punch line these days, it seems important to point out here that a Miss America crown was for many years considered the most prestigious title any woman could hold; in the early 1960s, the pageant telecast was among the highest-rated shows on TV" (Zeisler 49).

Boob-Girlie Symbol, protests the way women were "forced daily to compete for male approval" in particular by beauty standards and rigid expectations for physical appearance. In point two, *Racism with Roses*, the pageant itself is the focus because since its beginning in 1921, "The Pageant has not had one Black finalist, and this has not been for a lack of test-case contestants. There has never been a Puerto Rican, Alaskan, Hawaiian, or Mexican-American winner. Nor has there ever been a *true* Miss America—an American Indian" (original emphasis, 522). The third point, *Miss America as Military Death Mascot*, argues against Miss America as the "cheerleader" of war noting the previous year she "went to Vietnam to pep-talk our husbands, fathers, sons and boyfriends into dying and killing with a better spirit." The protesters "refuse to be used as Mascots for Murder" (522). The fourth point, *The Consumer Con-Game*, protests the way the pageant uses sex to sell products and constructs women as "beasts of buying" (522-523). The other six points include rejections such as: general beauty standards, the insistence of women's aesthetic as youthful, the representation of women as the Madonna-whore or the double standard for women's heterosexuality, the low-status and lack of career positions and credibility women had access to (little boys as presidents and little girls as miss America), and the continued cultural value that encourages girls to want to attain this as a valuable status of womanhood.

This long list of reasons to protest the Miss America Pageant also reveals the way feminists were working to expand the roles of women beyond wife, mother, and sex object in consciousness-raising groups and their consciousness-raising actions. In addition to the particular protest of the image of Miss America and the intersections and

multiple power structures it rejected, the protesters meant to make a point about media and the police force: "The women refused to speak with male reporters. Although this was spun by critics as knee-jerk man hating, it was a calculated gesture meant to highlight women's marginalized place in the newsroom" (McLeod 145). The protesters decided, in case there was trouble, they would reject male authority and insist that they be arrested by policewomen only. In Atlantic City at that time, policewomen were not permitted to make arrests (McLeod 144). The protest invited women of all kinds to join: "Women's Liberation Groups, black women, high-school and college women, women's peace groups, women's welfare and social-work groups, women's job-equality groups, pro-birth control and pro-abortion groups—women of every political persuasion—all are invited to join us" (Morgan 521). Sympathetic men could participate by a donation of money, cars, and drivers (Morgan 522).

The 1968 Miss America Pageant Protest is considered a turning point for the Women's Liberation Movement. Zeisler and Kembrew McLeod explain that the symbolic act of throwing away compulsory constraints of femininity—bras, girdles, nylons—was "a tangible act of defiance" (McLeod 145). Today's bras are nothing like the ones feminist protesters used as symbols. Moreover, Zeisler reminds us that the media has always played a crucial role in dictating to women who they are and who they should aspire to be. She argues that advertising aimed at female consumers works to construct women as in need of product to be valuable:

> To advertise to women, this has meant that female consumers are made to feel insecure and off balance for most of their waking moments: too short, too tall, too fat, too skinny, dull-haired, lumpy-bottomed, flat-chested, thin-lipped, too pale,

> not pale enough, too smart, too dumb, not sexy, a lax housekeeper, a lazy cook, a bad mother, a neglectful spouse. In each of these indictments of women's appearance or temperament, there's a product to be sold. (Zeisler 24)

Justifying the protest of the Miss America Pageant of 1968, Zeisler continues insisting, "it makes sense that pop culture was the site of the first large-scale feminist actions, actions in which the lies and machinations of media and of pop products were deconstructed and laid bare for everyone to see—everyone, that is, who wanted to see" (48). However, of all of the Women's Liberation public demonstrations, this protest was singled out by the media to discredit the movement with the derogatory bra-burning misnomer. As McLeod notes, "Once the bra-burning meme was unleashed, the women's movement lost control of the narrative, and it was used as a bludgeon to caricature feminism" (145). However, while these scholars reveal how the bra-burner image took hold in the public imagination, they do not demonstrate how from the inception of the misnomer, the voice of many feminists rejecting the invective.

The development of the shorthand of bra burner has to do with the media coverage of the event. As feminists engaged in the accepted genre of protesting, their message was largely glossed over by the mostly male media, because many radical feminists refused to talk to male reporters, in petition of the all male media, and in premonition that they would be misunderstood and ridiculed. Other feminists groups, particularly liberal feminist groups like the National Organization for Women (NOW), "saw the media as a necessary tool with which to spread the word of the women's movement, and they made themselves readily available for quotes and interviews via newsletters and press releases" (Zeisler 62). However, even feminists who did speak with

male reporters were often misrepresented and demonized. Media often had an "attack-dog approach" that "set the tone for decades of future coverage of feminist issues and actions, in which news outlets reported on feminism without talking to actual feminists, letting a few choice words from self-professed 'anti-women's-libbers' define the entire movement" (63). Despite the media's attempt to demonize the feminist movement, it continued to grow. People saw through the media's agenda and identified with the aims of the movement. NOW's membership, for example, "grew from twelve hundred to forty-eight thousand between 1967 and 1974" (64). Zeisler argues that maybe it was the media's unabashed sexist coverage that led people to join the movement. Whatever the case, she argues, "if the media frenzy surrounding the women's strike made anything clear, it was that feminism seemed like enough of a threat to justify entire newscasts and newspaper stories insisting that it wasn't." (64)

The original coverage of the protest was written by a female reporter, Lindsey Van Gelder of the *New York Post*. In a 1992 *Ms. Magazine* article, Van Gelder explains that when the protest press release arrived at the *New York Post* her editors had a "thigh-slapping reaction. . . .Broads picketing their rights! It was a hilarious concept." She was sent to the protest to write a "humor piece," but after meeting Robin Morgan, one of the main organizers of the protest, she wanted to do a serious story. Van Gelder wanted something that would carry moral weight and at the height of the Vietnam War when men were setting fire to their draft cards in public protest, she thought she would draw a connection. Van Gelder writes, "It [draft card burning] was an act associated with dignity, bravery, and impeccable politics. To talk about bras being burned was at one and

the same time to speak in a language that the guys on the city desk could understand (i.e. tits) and to speak in code to the radicals of our generation." The beginning of the news article published in 1968, titled in less ambiguous terms "Bra-Burners & Miss America" went like this: "Lighting a match to a draft card or a flag has been a standard gambit of protest groups in recent years, but something new is due to go up in flames this Saturday. Would you believe a bra-burning?" Even in her 1992 piece for *Ms. Magazine,* Van Gelder addresses young readers who might question "why feminists were goofy enough to toss their undergarments in the garbage" (80). She describes the discomfort of women's undergarments at that time, and notes that the same week she wrote a story about how women should be able to wear pants in offices, schools, and restaurants.

While Van Gelder calls herself the "Mother of the Myth of the Maidenform Inferno," scholars have argued that the meaning of Van Gelder's serious piece on the protest was lost in translation. Art Buchwald is often cited as the man who started the pejorative bra burning shorthand in his column of 1968 with a piece called "Uptight Dissenters Go Too Far in Burning Their Brassieres." He argues that doing away with beauty aids for women will "destroy everything this country holds dear" (A25). Describing feminists at the protest as "misled," he continues to argue that American women need all the beauty help they can get:

> For years now hundreds of thousands of scientists, and billions of dollars in research, have gone into new methods of making the American female the most attractive, the most seducible, the most irresistible woman in the world. Where nature failed, American know-how succeeded, and thanks to our scientific ingenuity, it is now impossible for anyone to know where God leaves off and Maidenform takes over. (A25)

Buchwald claims that if women got rid of beauty aids that they would turn back the clock to "precivilization" where men and women looked and smelled more alike than different. He connects women's looking and smelling like men to justification for physical violence against women. It was not until women started rubbing rose petals on themselves, according to Buchwald, that men stopped hitting them over the heads with clubs. Buchwald writes that even in 1968, men wanted to club women over the head, and "there is no better excuse for hitting a woman than the fact that she looks just like a man" (A25).

The pejorative bra narrative that began with the 1968 Miss America Pageant Protest continued as a shorthand to represent feminism through today. Even the popular vernacular of film, newspapers, and magazines reveal this popular image.

Figure 5. Freedom Trashcan

Zeisler argues that the protest was a "mixture of outrage, education, and biting humor. . . .The plan for the day was simple, freewheeling, and even kind of joyous: New York Radical Women envisioned a protest that would culminate in a women's liberation rally to coincide with the crowning of the new Miss America, but that would also be, as NYRW put it, 'a groovy day on the boardwalk'" (49-50). The above image taken at the protest reveals this sense of a protest and fun. The woman is laughing as she tosses a symbol of patriarchal constraint into the notably fire free "freedom trashcan." Yet, scholars identify the bra burner as a significant "shorthand" for modern feminism.[34] McLeod argues that, "the mental image of bra burning quickly took root in public memory. . .People just filled in the blanks with their imagination" (145). An *UpWorthy* post by Katherine Fritz provides an image of what she believes many people think of when she identifies as feminist.

[34]And *bra burning* remains convenient shorthand for describing the upheaval of the 1960s and early 1970s. It is casually invoked as a defining phrase, or cliché, of those troubled times. . . . [he gives 6 examples]. . . .More significantly, the phrase became an offhand way of ridiculing feminists and mocking their sometimes militant efforts and As Zeisler, co-founder of *Bitch* magazine, states "It's been a shorthand description of modern feminism for countless years" (52).

Figure 6. Public Imagination

For Fritz the shorthand of the bra burner image is also connected to disavowal of beauty products, militant anger, and man-hating. The repetition that she is not a bra burner and that she does not hate men reveals a connection between the bra burner shorthand as someone who does hate men. Looking at Figure 1, the above image of women at the protest enjoying a "groovy day on the boardwalk" and the image of what might be called the public imagination demonstrates a matter of perspective. One image shows a protest where women joyously toss symbols into a symbolic trashcan to represent women beginning to assert the knowledge production for women by women. The other image, laughable and outrageous, highlights the dominant image of feminists from a patriarchal perspective. This reference situates feminism as either so trivial it has nothing to be concerned with but discomfort of underwear, so militant that it rejects femininity or gender presentation variety, or so misguided it is the outright hatred of men. Just as with Buchwald's words and other images like it, this image discredits through trivializing or

vilifying feminism the valuable and important work that second-wave feminists in particular, and feminists in general achieved.

Popular Memory and Second-Wave Feminism, 1970s-2015

A survey of over forty popular newspaper and magazine articles from 1970 to the present day illustrates how the image of the bra burner has encouraged the Women's Liberation Movement to be remembered pejoratively. The most prominent way that the term *bra burner* is used in these articles points to a feminism that goes "too far" in its perspective and advocacy for women's rights. The other most prominent way the term is used is to acknowledge that "bra burner" is an incorrect pejorative label for feminists. In rhetorical terms, *bra burner* is a term used as amplification that acts as *divisio* and *correctio*. *Divisio* is a figure that amplifies thus creating a division into kinds and classes, while *correctio* is a "making straight, setting right" (Lanham 42).

Since the inception of the cultural citation technique of *bra burner,* the term has been used as a kind of rhetorical amplification of division. A 1970s column on a fashion show that was a "Salute to Women of Achievement," notes that "It honored some 30 feminine achievers 'those who are out doing something, not burning bras,'" (Morris). Articles about how women's liberation is a "joke" or "bore" to small town women, because a weakness of the women's movement is the failure to reach small town America, respond with: "Like most Hope [Indiana] women, she is vociferously in favor of equal pay for equal work. But the first words that come out of her mouth when asked about women's lib are: 'What does burning bras have to do with making things equal?" (Klemesrud). Each of these uses of the term *bra burner* divides feminism into two

different kinds of feminism: an outlandish and misguided feminism, and a more sensible, logical feminism. On the one hand, bra burning feminism implicitly is not *doing* anything important, and this makes it not to be taken seriously—a joke—thus making it nonsensical. An interviewee asks what it achieves. The other kind of feminism is "out doing something." This feminism is connected to equal pay for equal work, and is not concerned with women's underwear. Another figure of amplification is *comparatio* (comparison). These examples are moments when the cultural citation of bra burner is being used to divide feminism into a bra burning feminism and a logical feminism, and immediately compares the two to show how the bra burning kind of feminism is silly, illogical, and does not achieve anything.

In the 1980s the rhetorical use of division and comparison continues. In an article and interview describing the novelist Jackie Collins's success, Collins argues "I'm a feminist. . . .I'm not a feminist who scrapes off her makeup and pins back her hair. I'm not a bra-burner. If a man said: 'Let's burn our jockstraps,' he'd be laughed out of existence" (Christy). Collins begins by associating her feminism with her sexual freedom and career success, but quickly qualifies her claim by pointing out that she is not *that* kind of feminist, the bra burning kind. She reinforces the public memory of bra burning feminism as a disavowal of all beauty products and something ludicrous.

This rhetorical technique of remembering was also used in the 1990s. Celebrating an Omaha woman's fight for rights from an early age, Judith Nygren declares, "Mrs. Davis would never be labeled a 'bra burner,'. . . .Mrs. Davis didn't push for equality 'in a militant way. She did it in a womanly way'" (n.p.). Another article from the *Seattle Times*

lauding a YWCA leader describes the subject of the article, "'She was never a bra burner, but was, in her own quiet way, ahead of her time because she did what she wanted. . . .She was beautiful, strong, and influenced a lot of lives'" (Beers n.p.). In the first example, bra burner is connected to militancy and a lack of femininity, while fighting for women's rights is separated as another practice. Similarly, the leader of the YWCA is separated from bra burning feminism as a something other than being a woman and to being able to act as one pleases and have the power to influence others.

In a 2014 article discussing feminist representation in the television series *Mad Men* entitled "An Ode to Mad Men's Peggy Olson: TV's Most Relatable Feminist," actress Elisabeth Moss describes her character, Peggy:

> She's not gonna start burning bras. She's a different kind of feminist. She's the one who works really hard, and concentrates on her job, and wants to move up in the world of her business. And her progressiveness and her brand of feminism—it comes in probably a bit of a more realistic way, you know? Those were the women—there were more of those women than were the hippies who burned bras and picketed. Those women were the ones who were actually, you know going in and asking for equal pay, and asking for equal rights, and demanding to be treated better in the workplace. That's who she is. (Dockterman)

Interestingly Moss's explanation has an eerie recollection of the small town women interviewed for the newspaper in the 1970s or the fashion show describing real women's achievements. Her kind of feminism is one that does "real" work. Again feminism is divided into a bra burning brand and an appropriate brand that is connected to work, equal pay, and equal rights. Bra burning feminism is characterized as a kind of feminism that did not achieve anything. Moss's kind of feminism is the intellectual kind that explores cultural and political connections that restrict women. Thus, this division of

ideology between what a radical feminist is in body type and attitude and what a feminist does to promote herself in the workplace and as a leader become two distinct representations. The negative representation is the bra burner; the positive is the working woman who works within the patriarchal system by not upsetting patriarchal expectations.

While division amplified this ideological and representational split of the bra burning feminist and the socially acceptable working woman's feminism, correction works to subvert and revise this divide. For certain, historians have pointed out how this bra burner reference is a myth or at least contested. From a rhetorical perspective correction or *correctio* is also a figure of amplification. The act of setting something straight draws attention to that which was incorrect, in this case the bra burner reference. Surprisingly, the notion that bra burning is a myth is persistent on a myriad of popular culture sites: Snopes.com describes itself as "The definitive Internet reference source for urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors, and misinformation." The op-ed states that after screenings of Jennifer Lee's independent documentary, *Feminist: Stories from Women's Liberation*, young women kept asking why they did not know these stories (n.p.).[35] Notably, this is the same issue that scholars Jack and Enoch come upon when teaching histories of women's rhetorics. Women's history is an important aspect of second-wave feminism, since many women knew little about the history of first-wave feminism. When interviewed for Lee's documentary feminist Shelia Tobias said, "One of the great

[35] Lee also describes how earlier in her career a co-worker asked her if she was a feminist, ten years earlier. The woman that asked was distancing herself from the terms, and Lee "reached into my memory for images and quotes to help explain why I was feminist and I couldn't grasp any." It wasn't until she made her film that she was able to articulate concrete achievements of feminists to articulate why she claimed the term.

travesties of growing up in the '50s was not knowing about women's history except for a brief moment in time in which there was suffrage" (Lee n.p.).

Both the misnomer of bra burning feminists and its attempted correction began in the 1970s. Klemesrud's 1974 article "Can Feminists Upstage Miss America" discusses a women's convention sponsored by NOW and clearly represents the misnomer as a myth. Describing the 1968 protest and the Freedom Trashcan, Klemesrud states, "Although the contents of the can were never burned, the incident was widely reported, and out of it grew the perjorative *[sic]* term 'bra-burners' used in reference to militant feminists" (n.p.). The article, "The Misnomer that Stuck" published in 1977 states: "The early supporters of the women's movement got a label that caught on—but it was inaccurate. They were called 'bra burners'. . . .for several years thereafter, feminists were quick to correct and criticize anyone who referred to them as 'bra burners.' But the label persists" (n.p.). Again in a 1995 *New York Times* article, "No Smoke, No Fire," Carole S. Appel records that "no fires were started, no bras were burnt, but a demeaning phrase entered the language nonetheless: 'Bra burners,' used to characterize an entire movement devoted to the securing equality for women" (n.p.). This reporter further notes that "Careless journalists and others associated this symbolic act with the draft-card burning that occurred in other protests of the day, but the carelessness shouldn't have to continue" (Appel n.p.). In 2014 multiple articles focus on the myth. With titles like, *TIME*'s "Feminism Has a Bra-Burning Myth Problem," *Salon*'s "No Bras Were Harmed in the Making of Feminism" and *NPR*'s "Pageant Protest Sparked Bra-Burning Myth," both public memory and scholarly perspective should be righted, but they are not.

The social movement of feminism as a whole and the idea of individual feminists in public memory continue to be misrepresented as a particular version of second-wave feminism associated with the image of the bra burner. This stigmatization of feminism as a whole, and second-wave feminism in particular, has serious implications given that many second-wave goals (and some first-wave for that matter[36]) still have not been achieved. Many women and feminists recall the rejection of the ERA, the disparity in wages, limits on reproductive rights, the continued epidemic of rape and sexual assault, and the educational, judiciary, and medical lack of response to such a problem as just some of the unfinished issues that feminists worked to change in the 1960s and 1970s. Remembering feminism as a whole, and second-wave in particular, as derogatory or trivial bra burners who are "ugly" lesbians that hate men dismisses and minimizes the work that feminists did and continue to do. Thus, it has serious political impacts on our present feminist needs and future feminist achievements.

The negative connotation of the term *feminism* is evident in both public memory and academic memory, as well as among second-wave scholars, especially those who believe in a progressive narrative of feminism, in which second-wave feminism is anachronistic and essentialist. As a person with a diverse group of friends both conservative and liberal, I find that many of my friends who do not identify as feminists believe in feminist principles but do not want to be viewed pejoratively and do not have much knowledge of feminism's history. As a college instructor, I have discovered that many of my students in lower-level writing and literature courses do not identify with

[36] ERA started in 1923.

feminism; they insist they are not angry man-hating bra burners. As a colleague, a woman, and feminist teacher-scholar, I have had conversations with other colleagues exploring who identifies as "feminist" and whether or not the label helps or hurts our scholarship and activism. It is rare for me to meet others who quickly, easily, and proudly identify as feminist whether that is inside or outside academia. Beyond my own personal experience, discourses surrounding feminism as the "F-word" reveal the pejorative nature of a public understanding of the movement. Julie Zeilinger's 2012 monograph for young women in their teens and twenties, *A Little F'd Up: Why Feminism is Not a Dirty Word*, marks a need to rescue the term. Moreover, Hemmings acknowledges that "Between 1989 and 2001. . . a Lexis-Nexis search of English-language newspapers turned up eighty-six articles referring to the death of feminism and an additional seventy-four referring to the postfeminist era" (72).

Academic Memory and Bra Burners

Journalism professor W. Joseph Campell, author of *Ten of the Greatest Misreported Stories in American Journalism*, includes the feminist trope of bra burners among the top ten, calling it a "nuanced myth." While he acknowledges the pejorative term and its use for ridiculing the issues that feminists brought up, he uses the chapter to prove "that bras were set afire, briefly, during the protest that day. It also argues that the notion of flamboyant bra burnings is fanciful and highly exaggerated—a media myth whose diffusion can be traced to a humor columnist's riff" (102). Joining in the continued conversations about whether or not bras were actually burnt at the protest, he provides evidence by two "eye witnesses," journalists Katz and Boucher. Citing the ethical and

credible reputation of these male journalists, Campbell ignores the claim made by Robin Morgan, whom he states was the leader of the protest, in favor of these two "ethical men." Morgan insists no bras were burnt. Campbell continues with "Their accounts [Boucher and Katz] offer compelling evidence that bras were set afire that day, though not with the flamboyance as the stereotype has it. Shorn of the adjectives mass or flamboyant, bra burning becomes nuanced, an epithet not entirely misapplied to the women's liberation protest at Atlantic City" (113). He continues by explaining how the term *bra burner* "has slowly morphed over the decades, to take on a meaning that is somewhat less pejorative and less demeaning" (113). But then he tells the story of a 1999 failed protest in which a bra was being burnt and the ridicule resulting from that act at The Ohio State University, noting "It won top billing that year in the 'campus Outrage Awards' given by the conservative Intercollegiate Studies Instituted to call attention to acts of 'extreme political correctness'" (114). He ends with Tyra Banks afternoon television show in which women burn their bras by claiming, "So finally, there it was: unmistakably, a bonfire of burning bras. . . .the image had become a reality—in a gratuitous and puzzling gesture on afternoon television" (114). While beginning with the bra burner as a "nuanced myth," he ultimately manages to silence the perspective of women protesting. He does not hear what feminists said they were doing; instead he relies on two male journalists. He discredits feminism again by using an example of a failed political protest at a university in order to end with bra burning on a day time talk show and his conclusion that the myth is "gratuitous" and "puzzling"(114).

Even feminist academics sometimes discredit this particular wave of feminism and its attempts to access more opportunities for women. As Susan Jarratt and Hemmings have pointed out, historical narratives of the waves of feminism often follow a progressive and telic narrative situating "an early feminism called cultural/radical, acknowledge a middle-stage liberal feminism seeking equal rights, and culminate in poststructural feminism, which seems to out-shine its dowdy sisters in sophistication and analytic power" (Jarratt 24). Moreover, general feminist histories understand second-wave as an important step, but one riddled with the failure of middle-class whiteness and problems of identity essentialism.

Hemmings catalogues multiple academic narratives of the history of feminism: progress, loss, return. Pointing out how these narratives, despite how they understand our current place in feminism, all use the same kind of glosses to forward their version of history. She explains that "All three stories divide the recent past into clear decades to provide a narrative of progress or loss, proliferation or homogenization" (5). Noting how academic feminism itself is a vulnerable position, there is a kind of pressure that "What takes place in the past is cast as irredeemably anachronistic, in order that the present can represent the theoretical cutting edge" (38).

Recitation and Consciousness-Raising as the Heart of the Women's Movement

The bra burning shorthand takes us back again and again to a particular image and time in second-wave feminism. The competing narratives have been occurring since the inception of this image. While people have argued for the past 40 years that bra burner is a misnomer, the shorthand reference, belief in its occurrence and the derogative

representation of feminism have become the dominant narrative. Instead of continuing to debate whether or not the burning of articles of clothing actually happened, I suggest it is more useful to start with the image of a group of women sitting in a circle and dialoguing: a consciousness-raising group. This practice was the first part of the planning of the 1968 protest, and one consistently identified as the heart of the women's movement in archival documents. By remembering consciousness-raising at that moment, we can begin to reshape our historical memory, to remember differently women's achievements, to replace the public memory of the "bra-burner" or even the memory of the "debates about bra burning" with images, stories, and commemorations of a practice central to feminism and emblematic of the work that feminists did to empower each other to speak and name their need for feminism.

To do this we need to engage in recitation. For Hemmings, "recitation" is a review, a "revisiting material previously encountered," an "un-forgetting" (180). She argues that the trouble with certain citation techniques is that they allow for narratives with different inflections of value to nonetheless create the same flattened-out shared history. Hemmings posits a practice of recitation to be used to open up potential, to "foreground absence, provide a break in the monotony of the repeated, and suggest other historiographies that are politically and theoretically transparent" (190). A scholar begins "from affectively invested erasures in order to reveal possibilities for thinking the past and present differently" (190).

In other words, Hemmings argues that the narrative history one tells about feminism not only situates feminism, past, present, and future, but also situates the author

and her investments. Alternate citation practices linked with an explanation of the author's affective attachment to this other way to cite and with an explanation of what it allows for, can be politically useful for feminist scholars. Hemmings uses the example of how Judith Butler is cited again and again as ushering a new postmodern feminism that wrenches sex from gender. Noting how she becomes an agreed upon checkpoint in narratives, whether the narratives are of loss, progress, or return, Hemmings finds that Butler is constantly referred to as indebted to Foucault in a way that makes Butler's "transformation of feminism . . . derivative" or indebted to Foucault. While acknowledging the influence of Foucault's work on Butler, she asks, what if we spend more time thinking through the influence of Monique Witting and Luce Irigray on Butler's work? For Hemmings, the recitation, replacing Foucault with Witting, opens up part of the history of Butler's theory in connection to lesbian theorists, which brings them and their accomplishments to the forefront.

From a rhetorical perspective, when women are still negotiating gender to access credibility even within academia, citing traditional authorities, what Hemmings calls glosses, becomes especially important. On the one hand, referencing Foucault and other canonical figures immediately garners credibility because he is an already agreed upon acceptable and admirable theoretical figure. However, pointing to a lesser known theoretical figure who also influences Butler's work, and simultaneously suggests a different history, may require more rhetorical work in other areas. However, this form of recitation disrupts the accepted and expected; thus it opens up new possibilities, ones already in the text. Just as Jack and Enoch refer to disturbing the popular memory with

alternate versions, Hemmings theory of recitation can be applied not only academia but also to public memory.

Over and over again, guidelines, promotional materials, and reflective essays from 1968-1976 refer to consciousness-raising groups as the bedrock of the second-wave feminist movement. As a vital first step to self-awareness and cultural awareness, it provided a crucial recursive practice helping the feminists involved to grow and learn personally and politically. It was the "cornerstone of the Movement," (Sappho Collective "Consciousness-Raising") "the heart and soul of the woman's movement," (Gornick) the "structure" proposed to build "a mass based radical feminist movement" (NYRF "Introduction"). In her essay explaining the ideologies and actions of the Women's Liberation Movement, Jo Freeman, a feminist scholar active in the Women's Liberation Movement, situates it as the most significant contribution of the movement to social change:

> The most prevalent innovation developed by the younger branch has been the 'rap group.' Essentially an educational technique it has spread far beyond its origins and become a major organizational unit of the whole movement. . . .From a sociological perspective the rap group is probably the most valuable contribution so far by the women's liberation movement to the tools of social change. (3)

Many feminists at that time claimed that consciousness-raising was at the heart of the movement, because it was a practice used by most (if not all) the diverse sects of the feminist movement. Despite disagreements about politics, groups considered more conservative like NOW and groups considered more radical like Redstockings participated in this practice. Feminist groups like National Organization of Women

(NOW), Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (AFLA), National Alliance of Black Feminists (NABF), Redstockings, New York Radical Women, and more used consciousness-raising. The practice itself was not connected to any identity in particular, and its structured yet flexible do-it-yourself guidelines exploring one's experience in relation to her context made the practice accessible and practical for a wide range of women and feminists. Some groups like NABF encouraged Black men to begin their own consciousness-raising practices.

Because of the overwhelming evidence that consciousness-raising was a key practice in the second-wave feminist movement, as defined by women who participated in the movement themselves, consciousness-raising was emblematic of second-wave feminist movement. What does this recitation offer? Rather than the popular misrepresentation of feminists at this time being white, middle-class housewives, or angry bra-burning lesbians, the most accurate way to represent the entire movement with brief representation/description is with the image of a group of women talking in a circle, a consciousness-raising group. Even popular representations of single feminist leaders, Gloria Steniem, Angela Davis, or Betty Freidan, are not useful because these women were singled out by the media as representative of the feminist movement. As individuals they could not encapsulate the collaborative nature and group efforts of the movement. In fact, consciousness-raising guidelines announce that the goal of consciousness-raising having rotating leaders was to encourage collaboration and dispel traditions of hierarchy in terms of authority. Using the concept of consciousness-raising avoids the trap of a few exceptional women who defied the expectations placed on them and thus became

extraordinary. Consciousness-raising groups were for all women. The literacy practices they encouraged were important because they incorporated knowledge and action. Remembering second-wave feminism as common consciousness-raising practices likewise makes it an accessible and usable practice for women today. Consciousness-raising was practiced by diverse kinds of women with multiple intersecting identities and offered practices in which women move beyond self-blame and personal failings for their problems in order to begin to relate to each other and understand how their problems are due to the way society is set up and valued. Instead of women's constant attendance for personal betterment and self-help and body modification, revaluing and remembering consciousness-raising as this accessible literacy practice allows women to approach these issues in a new way.

Understanding that consciousness-raising is emblematic of second-wave feminism is not only a more accurate way to describe that historical moment, but also it is a kind of representation that more accurately depicts the diversity and contradictions inherent in all historical moments. As political theorist Joan Cocks describes, "The past is made of meanings, actions, and events far more eclectic and various than any hegemonic culture would be eager to tolerate were the past to be present, or, and this is the real worry, were it to become actively a source of inspiration for the future" (28). The historical moment of second-wave feminism was not simply white middle-class women wanting to "get out of the house." Instead, consciousness-raising was, like Cocks posits about history, much more various and eclectic in its make up of different women and feminists working to identify gendered issues in relation to their identities and work to

solve such issues. Newspaper journalist Jacqueline Moore begins to get at the complexity of this historical moment with her description of the diverse Black women's organizations in Chicago in the 1970s. In discussing three different Chicago women's groups with the goal of specifically aiding Black women, she notes, "A number of different black female choruses now are being heard throughout the city. Although the notes of their songs are dissimilar, there may be some common harmony in their tune" (Jacqueline Moore Viewpoint: 3 Women's Groups' Common Goal: Aid Black Woman Chicago Defender June 1976 NABF/BE Vivan Harsh CPL). Moore's words speak directly to the multivocality and difference existing within second-wave feminist organizations and agendas.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION:

THE VALUE OF REMEMBERING CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

As I look at the 2016 CCCC's convention schedule, I see more women wanting to join in the consciousness-raising momentum. First, there is the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition. In existence for twenty-five years, at CCCC's it has annually called women and men to rejoice in, explore further, and question more thoroughly the discipline's tensions between what it claims to do and women's roles in that endeavor. In addition, its biennial Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference focuses on supporting women's work. Second at CCCC's is the fully established and ongoing all-day Wednesday Feminist Workshop. It pushes the discipline, and women and men, further and farther into understanding women's roles in academe and extends the understanding of feminism as a viable force in the discipline. Third, a relatively new group at CCCC's is the Women's Network Special Interest Group (SIG). Its mission is to further explore the relationship of academe, gender, and labor issues. What matters here is that women's consciousness-raising groups continue to operate at the local and national levels, so we need to understand and reclaim our traditions and heritage. Reclaiming the 1960s-1970s consciousness-raising is not just a recitation of history, it is a needed first step in reclaiming a long tradition of women speaking for

themselves and advocating for change. Women's and men's use of literacy in consciousness-raising is dynamic and ongoing, even while so many think it is passé.

This dissertation started with a constellation of contemporary feminist issues: the development of WiE meetings, conversations among scholars about whether or not to identify as feminist, a pattern of flattened second-wave feminist historical narratives, public memory of second-wave feminism as either lacking or generally pejorative, and scholarly work on feminist rhetorics, collective rhetorics, and community literacy. In response to this constellation of questions and arguments, I argued for the discourses of second-wave feminist consciousness-raising as powerful community literacy practices and as a recitation for feminist scholars and women to use in scholarly and public accounts of discussions of that historical time period. As a recitation, or an image of the work of that time period, consciousness-raising offers a more complex vision and reveals new connections to the contemporary moment and practices. Demonstrating how consciousness-raising sessions were spaces that used literacy practices to persuade the self, which in turn persuaded an often antagonistic public, I maintain that these meetings should be reclaimed in second-wave feminism as a vital and productive source of social and political change.

A feminist recitation of the literacy practices of consciousness-raising acknowledges the historical erasure that the WiE meetings bring to light. WiE meetings are consciousness-raising meetings, but with a different purpose as they are focused on academe and discipline; thus the overwhelming similarities in method attest to their likeness. More importantly, if one of the main purposes of consciousness-raising is to

create a safe space where women can be persuaded of the validity of their own voice, WiE meetings provide similar outcomes for members of the UNCG English Department. For example, Catherine Hawkins, a former MFA student at UNCG and a member of the WiE group, attests to the way WiE meetings validated her, especially after her agonizing experience of being sexually harassed by a male professor. Hawkins says she felt a need to articulate her experience, and she was afraid. She did not know who she could turn to, but at the initial WiE meeting three years ago when she mentioned her experience with the harassing professor, she was supported. Hawkins describes the experience of being heard and affirmed as an experience that made her feeling of isolation dissolve because she began to recognize she was not alone. The moment confirmed her desire to call on support in future need. Hawkins said this safe place to voice her concern and the response of compassionate women, enabled her to start articulating her experience from a new perspective.

Resounding similarities exist between the rhetorical exigencies of second-wave feminist consciousness-raising groups and our contemporary WiE meetings, and the formats parallel one another. While the meetings are not precisely the same, WiE meetings do ostensibly resemble second-wave feminist consciousness-raising in these ways: rotating topics and leaders, analyzing personal experience and traditional texts, prioritizing women's voices and experiences in the production of knowledge, developing a safe space for speech, creating camaraderie among women, and pursuing community action to make change. WiE meetings provide a safe space for women working in the English Department to speak to one another, to affirm each other, and to dialogue over

difference; they do bring women together as a community of knowers and discussants. Delineating this connection allows scholars and feminists in the present moment to recognize the similarities and differences of their rhetorical practices and women before them, and being able to see and understand such similarities and differences offers scholars an opportunity to learn from these connections and to continue to engage in such processes and activities in more fruitful and conscientious ways. These disciplinary events that support individual women can more proactively move all women to action and change. Because of my research and analysis in this study, I contend that local consciousness-raising meetings in university settings, as in the WiE meetings, are instrumental to academic change in the institution and in the discipline.[37]

This dissertation's recitation offers consciousness-raising as something more than women getting together informally and talking about their immediate concerns. Instead it identifies a history and tradition of women's literacy practices that connect to and shape women's understanding of their roles in their family, community, workplace, and the world. The connection to this history opens up and legitimates the main practice of second-wave feminism. Rather than discount the important and courageous knowledge work that women did for the sake of themselves and their communities, we must value the theory and imperfect practices of such groups so that we recognize the traces of feminist pasts that are so heavily present and so that we can build out of that past.

By doing so, this dissertation has implications for feminist rhetorical studies, pedagogy, and women's and gender studies in four ways. First, it revisits second-wave

[37] At this point I know of five different English Departments at various universities that have meetings similar to UNCG's WiE.

feminism and resees it as a vital and continuing resource for understanding women's consciousness-raising, aligning consciousness-raising with a long history and tradition of women's community literacy practices and rhetorical theory. Like many other women's historical and collective literate and rhetorical actions, the use of literacy in consciousness-raising was ignored or even unreadable to those outside the community. Thus, the gendered nature of these specific literacy practices contributes to the ways they were misread and often characterized as ridiculous or silly. My project calls for more research on how gender shapes literacy practices and how those literacy practices are read because of the way they are gendered.

Second, my dissertation highlights the move that consciousness-raising has always offered in its starting point of self-persuasion to its end result of social persuasion. Adding on scholarship about the importance of listening as a rhetorical act and the power listeners have to dismiss or affirm a speaker, my project demonstrates that those who have less access to powerful discourses use self-persuasion to remove internalized discourses that discourage their own speech. Moreover, I illustrate how audiences are constructed in relation to the kind of knowledge being produced, in this case women discussing the power dynamics of the private sphere and their own personal experiences there. Self-persuasion and building an initial affirming audience goes a long way in preparing speakers to engage with more antagonistic public audiences. Whether in academe or society, not all are listened to, heard, or believed. The rhetorical strategy of developing a safe space with a willing audience as a place for rhetorical rehearsal is a necessary technique for marginalized groups today.

Third, my project offers pedagogical means for recognizing the literacy practices we are or are or not promoting in our classrooms. Reiterating how classroom dynamics between teacher, student, text, and other students shape a student's literacy engagement, my dissertation argues for the continued interrogation of classroom space, assessment practices, and teaching practices. Similarly, my dissertation highlights the importance of subjectivity to voice and knowledge production, and thus asks the discipline for a renewed attention to difference in the classroom and for further investigations of the classroom as a contact zone. My project provides a pedagogical approach by contesting the perceived understanding through alternative rhetorical views and arguments of the same time period and texts.

Lastly, it foregrounds the need for more archival work on the consciousness-raising groups of this time period to further substantiate the tradition, the shift from personal to social, and the need for recitation. Moreover, archival study in itself is a kind of consciousness-raising. A scholar goes into the archives to uncover shrouded histories, and even as she enters into the archival space with an idea of what she might find and learn, ultimately the experience of researching in the archives is one of entering into the unknown and developing awareness of the documents and the history that can be found there. This archival research as a consciousness-raising experience accounts for both the randomness of what is discovered—the voices uncovered—and the responsibility of selecting and naming those voices through rhetorical listening. It is in the archives that scholars do their own kind of consciousness-raising, where they listen to historical documents so to recite the histories they find there.

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